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CHARLES JAMES FOX

CHARLES JAMES FOX

A POLITICAL STUDY

BY

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PREFACE

THE author of this volume is one of many readers in whom Sir George Trevelyan's *Early Life of Charles James Fox* excited a sentiment which it is perhaps not an exaggeration to describe as a personal affection for the great Whig statesman. The fulfilment of Sir George Trevelyan's promise to continue the story of that life is awaited with eager expectation. This book is in no sense a biography. It is an attempt to portray the great ideas Fox stood for, to vindicate the essential consistency of his career, and to appreciate the magnanimous inspirations he gave to politics. If the aim of the book is not kept in mind, its proportions may strike the reader as unjust. No biographer of Fox could dismiss his early political career with the scant notice given it in these pages; in any study of the part he played in those large controversies that have a permanent interest, a preponderating importance must be assigned to the history of the struggle with the King, to the moral issues of the French war, and to the details of a momentous chapter in the relations of England and Ireland. These questions call for a minute treatment in a presentation of Fox as the champion, during the frenzied years of panic, of government by public discussion, and as one of the few Whigs who anticipated the great Liberal doctrine of national rights.

The writer wishes to thank Mr. G. P. Gooch, who was kind enough to read the book in MS., for many valuable

suggestions, and in writing the chapter on the Reign of Terror he received great assistance from Mr. D. L. Savory, of St. John's College, Oxford, who has made a very extensive search into the documents relating to the subject, and who is about to publish a monograph on the Revolutionary Societies.

March 1903

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CHARLES JAMES FOX

CHAPTER I

PRELIMINARY

Fox's youthful escapades in pleasure and politics. His education. His love of letters. His views about women. His friendships. His oratory. Disadvantages as a leader, (1) his private reputation, (2) his friendship with the Prince of Wales, (3) his recklessness, (4) his mistakes in tactics, *e.g.* the Coalition. His advocacy of unpopular causes not fatal to his influence. His characteristics, (1) courage, (2) high sense of honour and duty, (3) constancy. His relation to domestic problems. His attitude to Free Trade. The great champion of national justice and respect for freedom.

M. SOREL has remarked that public morality was low in England, and private morality amongst public men still lower, during the years that immediately preceded the French Revolution. Fox's escapades must fill many pages in any survey of the follies and the dissolute manners of those days. It is a subject no true admirer of Fox would wish to shirk, and no man was less lenient in speaking of it, less anxious to defend it by prevarications or evasion, or less ready to brazen it out in a nonchalant effrontery than Fox himself in his later life. Concealment, indeed, would have been out of the question when a young man helps to gamble away a hundred and forty thousand pounds before he is twenty-four, attends so regularly at Newmarket as to make for himself the reputation of being the first handicapper in the country, keeps a faro bank that is the talk of the town,

and lives his disordered life in the public eye, and, one might almost add, the public ear, even if there had been no George Selwyn to dog his young friend's follies, and no record at Brooks's to chronicle the ruinous bargains that he made with his whims and pleasures. If it was a mystery where Burke found the money to buy Beaconsfield, it was no mystery to anyone where Fox disposed of the thousands his father had amassed as Paymaster. The echoes of his youth clattered at his heels throughout his career, and his conscience and his enemies alike took care he should hear them.

Fox's first interventions in public affairs were in character with the furious energy he displayed in that madcap dance of disedifying revels. He went into Parliament when he was twenty, with only two principles of public duty: the first, loyalty to what his father thought and wished; the second, the satisfaction of that self-willed and undisciplined nature his father had taken so much pains to develop. His father destined him for the Court party, and to the Court party he belonged, as far as his impatience of anything like restraint or caution would allow any party to claim or to use him. His natural eloquence made him a powerful recruit, but his headstrong and impetuous temperament, quick to mutiny, and always prompt to usurp the direction of affairs, made him the embarrassment of his leaders, and to his adversaries the most odious and full-blooded incarnation of the doctrine they hated. He played the "enfant terrible" to the insolence of a domineering faction. He was never so happy as he was when trying to underline just those issues his wiser leaders wished to leave obscure, and provoking encounters which prudence would have avoided. It was his quarrel with North, that North did not ride the doctrine of arbitrary and masterful government hard enough or far enough, and that there was something incomplete in his love of domestic violence, and his hatred of constitutional restraints. But self-will was not the only quality that was stronger in his nature than a dim sense of party discipline. Affection for his father was a supreme passion, and the first

time he left North's Ministry it was to take up his family quarrel with the Court, and to oppose the Royal Marriage Act on which George had set his heart. It is a curious reflection that it was the speech in which he opposed that Act that first revealed his extraordinary gifts, and that even when a Minister in the Court party, Fox was hated and dreaded by the King. "Whether he abetted the Royal policy or whether he thwarted it, Fox never managed to please his sovereign. The very heat with which the rising orator attacked Wilkes, and defended Lowther, was ominous and alarming in the eyes of a ruler who cherished every abuse in Church and State, and who felt an uneasy presentiment that to whatever purpose fire might be put for the moment, its ultimate destination was to burn rubbish."[1]

The father whom Fox loved with such a warm heart is scarcely less remembered for his corruption in the House of Commons, than for the infinite trouble he took to make his son a prodigy of selfishness and vanity. When he was eight years old, it was left to Fox to decide whether he would go to school at Wandsworth or Eton, and his father announced the result in one of the most characteristic sentences recorded in that astonishing family history. "Charles," he wrote, "determines to go to Wandsworth." Afterwards he decided to go to Eton, and again his decision was final; when he was fourteen he was taken from school to the continent by his father, and taught all the mysteries of equivocal delights and self-indulgence in those places which boasted it their chief art that they made pleasure soft and various and voluptuous, and their chief attraction that their visitors pursued it without scruple or qualm. Fox of his own accord returned to Eton four months later, to distribute amongst his schoolfellows something of the mischief he had learnt. At Oxford, whither he went at fifteen, Fox made for himself a reputation for solid industry, which he treasured with pride in his later years, and developed an unexpected enthusiasm for mathematics. Once

[1] Sir George Trevelyan, *Early Life of C. J. Fox*, p. 490.

again his father interfered, dragged him against his will from Oxford to the continent, and brought him back into contact with that life of dissipation and extravagance which the young man followed with all the fiery energy of his nature. No man has ever owed such a sinister debt to a father who loved him passionately. Young Pitt was taught by Chatham to declaim from a high chair to an imaginary audience of admirers. Lord Holland brought up Pitt's great rival as if no art were so indispensable or so elusive as the art of self-indulgence, and no emulation in life higher or better worth a struggle than a headlong rivalry in the chase of pleasure.

Yet Fox in his worst days escaped the moral slavery that sooner or later overtakes almost all such careers. The particular pleasures he pursued are judged harshly and shunned and dreaded, not because such vices are necessarily the worst vices, for it is obvious that men may combine with an outward independence and composure a soul that is held in the tight grip of shameful passions, but because these habits tend to invade and overspread a man's nature until they become not merely a disturbing fragment of his life but the whole of it, stifling every generous sentiment and withering up every other taste and moral growth. Fox was dissolute, but not decadent. In the midst of his wildest excesses, the spring of his prodigality was always an exuberant energy, not a sapless softness. His hilarity was as remote as possible from the dead laughter of the wan and morbid voluptuary; if he sowed his wild oats as fast, and as widely as a man can, he was very different from such men as George Selwyn, who had no other oats to sow, and who lived out a life of monotonous bondage to an ignoble routine. It is impossible to place Fox or Fitzpatrick in the setting of that awful picture Diderot drew in Rameau's Nephew of the noisome wretchedness and corruption of a certain little world in Paris, where human nature was not only perverted or disarranged, but where everything that was healthy and robust had been suffocated and destroyed by the poisonous exhalations of the rank rottenness of

society, and sycophant and patron had reproduced the most horrible pestilence of Juvenal's Rome. Fox and Fitzpatrick never exiled their natural affections, and however riotously they lived, they always lived by their own standards of honour. They would no more have thought of telling a lie in earnest, or cheating at cards, in a society where that exercise was not unfrequently a profession, than they would have thought of declining a duel, or shrinking the challenge to brave the icy dangers of the Punch Bowl at Killarney. If they were less ingenuous than Harry Warrington, they had none of the craft of a Lord Castlewood. They were wild, boisterously extravagant, and insolently defiant of conventions and proprieties. They set a mischievous example, and scared every parent whose son came within the orbit of their fascinations. Such conduct is selfishness, and it spreads misery and ruin, but at least in this case it was not a selfishness that was cynical or brutal.

These two men had one great saving gift: they had other household gods than excitement and adventure and wanton pleasure. The well-known story of Fox, that after an evening's gambling had ruined him, his friends (who feared that he might lay violent hands on himself) found him at home, buried deep in Herodotus, may be read as an allegory of his life. Fox might travel from Paris to Lyons to buy the most gorgeous waistcoat in France, but he carried Ariosto in his pocket, and in all that wild round of the Baiaes and the Capuas of Europe he found time to master Dante, to become one of the best linguists of his time, and to collect other treasures than ladies' keepsakes and flashing slippers, and the nomad fame of a reckless libertine. "For God's sake," he wrote from Italy to Fitzpatrick, "learn Italian as fast as you can to read Ariosto. There is more good poetry in Italian than in all other languages I understand put together. Make haste and read all these things that you may be fit to talk to Christians." In the boy who wrote that letter at eighteen, the pleasures to which his father had apprenticed him could never become a permanent

tyranny and obsession, and to turn over the sympathetic pages in which Sir George Trevelyan describes Fox's passion for poetry, or his own letters to his nephew with their discussions of literature, and scholarship, and art, or the delightful anecdotes that lived in the tenacious memory of Samuel Rogers, is to understand how from an education that ought to have produced a man like Harry Richmond's father, Fox rescued and carried off in triumph a character unsurpassed for constancy, and moral vigour, and magnanimous and chivalrous self-sacrifice.

The love of poetry and scholarship was from the first a powerful element in Fox's nature. He loved and cherished all the great achievements of the mind even in the days when he seemed bent on making as poor and torn a thing as he could of his own life, and his own splendid talents. As he grew older the supremacy of those tastes was developed and established, though long after he joined the Rockinghams he still gambled. Just as in his unregenerate days he forgot the catastrophes that had beggared him so long as he had a play of Euripides within reach, so in his older days he found a very pleasant Lethe for crushing disappointments that would have made most men crabbed and morose, in the charms of his wife, his books, and his garden. In 1774 he was elected to the Literary Club, and associated with Dr. Johnson, and Gibbon, and Garrick, and Reynolds. He was always happy talking of the poets with scholars, and still happier as Dr. Johnson once complained, listening to men whose opinions he respected more than his own. In poetry he was for his time a singularly delicate critic. He worshipped Shakespeare, and Spenser, and Chaucer. Euripides he loved as passionately as he loved freedom, for he loved his very faults. "Euripides is the most precious thing left to us, and the most like Shakespeare," he once said to his nephew. During the brief time he was in office in 1806, he came into his rooms one morning, and found his secretary reading the *Alcestis*, a play he had been unable to buy in Ireland, and

he waited to see how Trotter would be affected by that passage which he never could read himself without emotion, in which Alcestis takes farewell of her bridal-chamber. Homer he read incessantly, and with a rare insight. For Virgil he had a great admiration, and Mr. Lecky tells a story handed down by oral tradition, how the best scholar in the House of Commons leant across the floor of the House to prompt Pitt through a quotation from Virgil, at a time when their hostilities were particularly violent and unmeasured. In the early days of the illness which killed him, he had the fourth Æneid read over to him again and again by his secretary, and when he lay dying he asked Lord Holland to repeat that passionate prayer, with which the old and stricken Evander sent Pallas to the fatal battle.

This great and imperishable world of dead men's thoughts was as real to him as the world of pleasure ever was, or the world of politics was ever to be. Rogers tells how one morning when he was in office, he was talking so eagerly about Dryden that he forgot he had to attend the King's levee, and only recollected it so late that he had to go in his ordinary clothes, reassuring himself with reflections that the King was too blind to notice how he was dressed. He would sooner have forgiven Pitt for his meanness over the Westminster Scrutiny than he would have forgiven Godwin for disparaging Racine. "It puts me quite into a passion: je veux contre eux faire un jour un gros livre, as Voltaire says. Even Dryden, who speaks with proper respect of Corneille and Molière vilipends Racine. If ever I publish my edition of his works I will give it to him for it, you may depend." He was as anxious to know how Wakefield defended Porson's emendations, as he had ever been to know the odds at Newmarket, and one of his last acts was to read Crabbe's poems in manuscript. It was not surprising that a statesman whose recreations for the last years of his life were the library and the garden, thought the right thing to look to in appointing Irish Bishops was classical erudition, or that he considered a study of Euripides

was the best preparation for public speaking, or that he said if he had a son, he would make him write Latin verses as the best way of learning the meaning of words. Had Fox not been in opposition almost all his life, scholarship and literature would have received a very different welcome in high places from the cold shoulder Pitt gave them. In art Fox had as keen opinions as in literature, and he adored all those masters, such as Guido and Domenichino, whose stars were in the ascendant in the eighteenth century, though they have since fallen a long distance from those heights in the public admiration. Modern taste would find more to its fancy in his judgment that Sir Joshua was at his worst in the grand style. It is impossible to imagine a more delightful life than the tranquil life Fox led in retirement with his books and his garden, talking to his neighbours about their turnips, and reading his favourite poets to a wife whom he always treated as his intellectual equal. Sir George Trevelyan has calculated that in a single winter, apart from his industrious private studies, he read aloud to Mrs. Fox, Tasso, Ariosto, Milton, Spenser, Lucretius, Virgil, Homer, and Apollonius Rhodius. "Oh, how I wish," he once said, "that I could make up my mind to think it right to devote all the remaining part of my life to such subjects, and such only, and indeed I rather think I shall; and yet, if there were a chance of re-establishing a strong Whig party, (however composed)—

> Non adeo has exosa manus victoria fugit,
> Ut tanta quicquam pro spe tentare recusem."

A glimpse into that life of Fox's letters is enough to repel the monstrous calumny quoted by Mr. Lecky, as the summary given by one of Fox's friends of his career. "He had three passions—women, play, and politics. Yet he never formed a creditable connection with a woman. He squandered all his means at the gaming table, and except for eleven months, he was invariably in opposition." Sir George Trevelyan, who will not be accused of drawing down

the curtain over Fox's escapades, and who does not pretend that his life as a young man was stricter than that of his boon companions, has shown that no man was more chivalrous or more high-toned in his mode of thinking about women. He loved Homer "because he spoke well of women." In the House of Commons, whether Tory or Whig, he always stood between women and the cruel inequalities of his time, such as the harsh law that punished the mother of an illegitimate child, and the brutal practice of burning women for the crime of coining, and when he stated his reasons against women's suffrage, reasons, which, under the conditions of the day, were good and valid, he repudiated with warmth the notion of the inferiority of women's judgment. When his mistress became his wife, he was the most unselfish and devoted of husbands. To argue that gambling was the ruling passion of his life, is to suggest that a habit which he abandoned before he was forty was more stubborn and enduring than a habit that was lifelong and ineradicable, and that his love of play survived his love of literature.

There is one consideration that disperses that harsh and distorted view of Fox more effectually than the facts of his life or the evidence of the letters in which he spoke his mind, without restraint or equivocation. A worthless character could never have won the friends that Fox made and kept. Burke was not the man to largess his friendship, and he loved Fox with an affection that outlived in alienation the days when they were comrades in arms in hard fought and disastrous warfare. Gibbon, who was hardly ever in his life in Fox's lobby, and hated most of his opinions, delighted in his society, and said of him: "Perhaps no human being was ever more perfectly exempt from the taint of malevolence, vanity, or falsehood." Dr. Johnson spontaneously acknowledged him as his friend. The devotion he inspired in his followers had something of the temper of fanaticism. "There are only forty of them," said Thurlow, "but they would all be hung for Fox." Fitzpatrick, who

was like a brother to him, was a singularly high-minded and chivalrous character. Fitzwilliam, a most honourable man who broke from his party, loved Fox as tenderly as Grey, a most honourable man who remained in the party. His example and his memory were idolised by Romilly and Francis Horner, and no man could want a finer laudation from a finer laudator than Fox received from Grattan: "A splendid authority and a great man; his name excites tenderness and wonder; to do justice to that immortal person you must not limit your view to this country; his genius was not confined to England; it acted three hundred miles off in breaking the chains of Ireland; it was seen three thousand miles off in communicating freedom to the Americans; it was visible, I know not how far off, in ameliorating the condition of the Indian; it was discernible on the coast of Africa in accomplishing the abolition of the slave trade. You are to measure the magnitude of his mind by parallels of latitude. His heart was as soft as that of a woman; his intellect was adamant; his weaknesses were virtues; they protected him against the hard habit of a politician, and assisted nature to make him amiable and interesting."[1]

There have indeed been few men to whom the adjective magnanimous could be so justly applied. Fox escaped all that is little in friendship and in enmity: his method of warfare was never petty. During his visit to Paris in 1802 he impressed everyone with his bearing as a great Englishman. Few passages describe him better than the account given by Madame Junot of his distress and indignation when at a French dinner-table someone put into Pitt's mouth a brutal expression about the French army in Egypt. "M. Fox change de physionomie avec une rapidité que l'on ne peut décrire. Ce n'était plus le tribun, le chef de l'opposition de l'Angleterre, c'était le frère de M. Pitt, le secourant de sa parole au milieu d'un cercle d'ennemis, comme il l'aurait secouru de son bras s'il l'eut trouvé seul

[1] *Speech on War with France*, May 1815, vol. iv. p. 382.

attaqué par plusieurs."[1] He had good reasons for disliking Horne Tooke, yet at a time when he hated going to London, he made the journey expressly in order to support Tooke's claims to sit in the House of Commons although he was in orders. Perhaps the most complete triumph in his life of his sense of what he owed to respect for his mind and to the claims of an exacting sincerity in politics, was his action in opposing the motion to honour Pitt's memory in terms that spoke of him as an excellent statesman. With Fox's conduct on that occasion it is interesting to compare the message Burke sent from his deathbed to Fox himself. "Mrs. Burke presents her compliments to Mr. Fox, and thanks him for his obliging inquiries. Mrs. Burke communicated his letter to Mr. Burke, and by his desire has to inform Mr. Fox that it has cost Mr. Burke the most heartfelt pain to obey the stern voice of his duty in rending asunder a long friendship, but that he deemed this sacrifice necessary; that his principles continue the same; and that in whatever of life may yet remain to him, he conceives that he must look to others and not to himself. Mr. Burke is convinced that the principles which he has endeavoured to maintain are necessary to the welfare and dignity of his country, and that these principles can be enforced only by the general persuasion of his sincerity." It was a letter painful to write and painful to read, but it did honour to Burke and to Fox alike.

Fox's intellectual pretensions have suffered from the constant and inevitable comparison with Burke, one of the greatest minds that were ever occupied with public affairs. The fragment of history which Fox wrote, and Lord Holland published, certainly did not add to his reputation except for conscientious exactness and thoroughness in his search after facts, and a fastidiousness in style which meant infinite pains and discipline. Fox's wisdom lay in a spacious and large-hearted liberalism, such as is to be found a century later in very few of the men who lay claim to that quality. His

[1] *Mémoires de la Duchesse d'Abrantes*, vol. xiv. p. 294.

speeches, with few exceptions, were the expression of that temper in all the varying and tangled conditions of human circumstance. De Quincey's disparagement of Fox by comparison not only with Burke but with Windham, need not concern us very much, but it is curious to notice Hazlitt's contrast between Burke's "imaginative" genius and Fox's "practical" genius, and the particularly unfortunate example he gives of the contrast. Hazlitt describes Burke as watching in the French war the passions of men unfolding themselves in new situations, and Fox as dogging the steps of the allies with his sutler's bag, his muster-roll, and his army estimates at his back. "He said, you have only fifty thousand troops, the enemy have a hundred thousand, this place is dismantled, it can make no resistance: your troops were beaten last year, they must therefore be disheartened this." An apt speech to put into Fox's mouth in order to point Hazlitt's antithesis, but about as unrepresentative a speech as could be imagined. The truth is that in their calculations of the French Revolutionary war both Fox and Burke argued entirely from the spiritual character of the conflict. It was Burke's argument that if you could create and collect a great and general enthusiasm, quite austere and disinterested, for order and monarchy, and the solemn antiquities of Europe, you could crush the French Revolution. It was Fox's argument that the moral energy of the passion for independence and for self-expression, the national will of France, was a force so terrible that it was idle to talk of subduing the sweep and play of its enthusiasm by any diplomatic combinations, or by arraying against it a power derived from any impulse that was less permanent or less truly universal. The speech Hazlitt puts into Fox's mouth is not Fox's speech at all, it is the other side of Pitt's mechanical arguments for the war. Pitt slept on an easy pillow as he dreamt of France bankrupt, her finances exhausted, and her population ravaged by the war. Statistics, estimates, and budgets were his right arm and consolation; in the minds of Fox and Burke alike they played a very small part on

that heroic battleground of passion and armed realities. Fox's common-sense was a conspicuous quality, and it made his general ideas luminous and phosphorescent; but they remained general ideas, general ideas of citizenship, of religious tolerance, of national rights, that he bequeathed to Liberalism, though the power with which he reinforced them by concrete argument sometimes obscured the truth that he approached the particular with the majesty of the universal.

In one excellence, at any rate, and as long as nations are governed from elsewhere than from the study, it cannot remain a minor excellence, Fox's eminence is undisputed. Amongst the crowned sovereigns of debate he sits on a lofty throne. He grew by degrees, said Burke, in the hour of their quarrel, to be the most wonderful debater the world ever saw, and Burke's judgment was scarcely thought exaggerated by the generation that heard him. Fox had nothing of Pitt's faultless regularity, his self-control and self-possession, his graceful and rolling harmonies, his generalship in the marshalling of facts and arguments. His gestures were ungainly, his voice harsh, and between his impetuous eloquence and Pitt's ordered strategy there was all the difference that distinguished the Revolutionary *levée en masse* from the tyrant-led mercenaries marching on the French frontiers with the precision and the minute drill of the age of Frederic the Great. "It is no wonder that this difference between the rapidity of his feelings and the formal roundabout method of communicating them, should produce some disorder in his frame, that the throng of his ideas should try to overleap the narrow boundaries which confined them, and tumultuously break down their prison-doors, instead of waiting to be let out one by one, and following patiently at due intervals and with mock dignity, like poor dependants, in the train of words:—that he should express himself in hurried sentences, in involuntary exclamations, by vehement gestures, by sudden starts and bursts of passions. Everything showed the agitation of his mind. His tongue faltered, his voice became almost suffocated, and his face

was bathed in tears. He was lost in the magnitude of his subject. He reeled and staggered under the load of feeling which oppressed him. He rolled like the sea beaten by a tempest."[1]

Pitt from his training and from his career came to regard the House of Commons as the supreme court of human justice, and the mastery of the House of Commons as almost the supreme end of human existence, the architectonic art. Fox's personality was too impetuous to allow speech to be to him what it was to Pitt, the instrument of his ambitions; speech was for him the flood of his released ideas rather than the cold creation of his mind. More than any of his contemporaries he revealed himself transparently in his oratory, revealed his magnanimity, his generosity, his love of England, his implacable hatred of mean tyranny, his extravagances, his unbridled temper. Everyone remembers Aristotle's argument about the relations between political and military characteristics in states,—how oligarchies should excel in cavalry and hoplites, and democracies in light troops. There is a certain correspondence between the style of eloquence and the temperament of the orator. At any rate no man could have heard Fox's voice as he thundered against English misrule in India, or against Napoleon's perfidy and oppression in Switzerland and Holland, or against Prussia's treacherous rapacity in Poland, without feeling that tyranny could never have made that splendid storm of sound its own. It was eloquence very unlike that of Guido's counsel in the court at Rome,

> "Language that goes, goes easy as a glove,
> O'er good and evil, smoothens both to one."

Not that Fox's speeches were merely a series of Philippics, for in that case he would not have been a great debater. They excelled in sharp-edged satire, in good-humoured raillery, in agile play with error, in a rare gift of penetration and of rapid discernment, which scattered like the morning

[1] Hazlitt, *Collected Works*, vol. iii. p. 338.

wind all the misty sophistries and confusions that collect in a debate. His consummate talent for stating a case with simplicity, clearness and a force that at first sight made it seem unanswerable was applied not less happily to his opponents' arguments than to his own.

With all these gifts and fascinations of character and intellect, Fox only held office as a Liberal for eleven months, and judged by superficial standards he was a failure as a party leader. He never won the public ear. Respected by his enemies, worshipped by his friends, and remembered with affection by the scattered champions of freedom throughout Europe,[1] he was regarded with a diffidence and an admiration half ashamed of itself by the public that had watched his moral escapades with dismay and astonishment. His age was the age of the growth of the followers of Wesley, and the tightening of the sense of private virtue. "Sir," said Thurlow to the worthless Prince of Wales, "your father will continue to be a popular king, as long as he continues to go to Church every Sunday, and to be faithful to that ugly woman, your mother; but you, Sir, will never be popular." Most of his subjects would have thought it an unwelcome bargain if George had strayed from a single one of his private virtues, and had flung open a single lattice of that dark and stagnant mind, where every notion that was mean and tyrannical was disciplined and nourished, to the wide daylight of freedom and integrity in public affairs, or a sense of the grandeur of a moral leadership in the enthusiasms stirring the minds of men. He longed to subdue America; he loved corruption; he fondled every abuse; he wished that no voice should be heard in his dominions but "the mingled voice of slavery and command"; his notion of government was arbitrary power, and he has left it on record that he would rather satisfy his hatred of Chatham, than save the Empire by Chatham's prowess; his mind was a perpetual darkness of public injustice and cruelty and wrong. But he

[1] Note an interesting account in Trotter's *Memoir* of Fox's meeting with Kosciusko in Paris in 1802.

was a correct husband, and a Christian of devout and seemly observance and an intolerant temper. Even to Wilberforce it was more important to be governed by a statesman whose private life was regular and strict than by a statesman who hated oppression and public iniquity. It is easy to imagine what a figure Fox, the retired bravo of gay and reckless fashion, presented to those grave and austere men, with their projects of enforcing the sanctity of Sunday by penal laws, with their rigorous asceticism, and their overbearing and hard-featured theology; a politician who played cards on Sunday could not expect much indulgence from men who thought it a cardinal sin in a moment of national peril, to employ Sunday in drilling volunteers. What these men did in reviving a certain pristine robustness in English life cannot easily be exaggerated, but their influence on public affairs was seldom on the side of justice and liberty. Wesley himself believed in coercing America, and he clung to the Irish Penal Code. Fox, who was outlawed by these guardians of public and private morality, had a virtue which is rare in politicians; he brought to national policy an exacting sense of honour and good faith, a courage in rebuking national wrong, and a hatred of all the sophistries and sedatives which act as hemlock on the consciences of men who in private affairs are scrupulous and honest. Few men are as high-toned in their judgment on public issues as they are high-principled in their private conduct, and there was no time when a mind that was sensitive for the public fame of England was a more precious possession than it was in the tumbling confusion of the foreign issues of George's reign.

If his own habits scandalised the public, Fox suffered both in popularity and in character from his long and intimate association with the Prince of Wales. The Prince was a very attractive and engaging person, whose charms won for him many friends, though his inconstancy forbade him to be true to any of them. The intimacy of the great Whig leaders with this agreeable profligate was a grave misfortune to their party. To that intimacy were largely

due the factious inconsistencies into which Fox and Burke were betrayed over the Regency question, an escapade in political opportunism that brought great and deserved discredit on the quondam champions of popular control. The constitutional issues raised in the controversy between Fox and Pitt have never been decided, but it remains lamentably true that Fox and his party looked to the Prince to restore them to power, and not even the just rancour with which they remembered how the King had treated them can excuse their readiness to resort to a method of revenging themselves on the King and on the public that was irreconcilable with their own doctrines. His friendship with the Prince of Wales led Fox into an embarrassment in which he can scarcely be acquitted of something worse than imprudence. The Prince authorised Fox to deny that he was married to Mrs. Fitzherbert, a Catholic lady, at a time when rumour was persistent, and the Prince was applying to Parliament to sanction an increase in his allowance. Fox afterwards found that he had been deceived. To retract the statement involved all kinds of grave and critical issues, and the arguments for silence are obvious. Yet it is difficult to be persuaded that it was an honourable thing, however strong the pressure of reasons of state, to allow the House and the country to retain an impression Fox now knew to be false, affecting as it did the honour of Mrs. Fitzherbert, particularly as during the Regency debates, when Fox was ill and away, Dundas quoted his declaration on the subject as final. On discovering the truth Fox broke off his relations with the Prince, but unhappily only for a year, and it was not until the Revolution that he was really emancipated from that malignant star. Few enmities could have been as fatal to Fox's influence in the country as the friendship of Carlton House. Pitt bore a private character that was conspicuously blameless, Fox's irregularities were notorious. Pitt was heir to the lustre of a great and victorious name, Fox to the ignoble corruption that accompanied the Peace of Paris. The contrast was already

damaging enough before the public came to know Pitt as the statesman who had rescued a popular and respected King, and Fox as the bosom friend of a Prince who was known to be a gambler, a drunkard, and a rebel against the King's will, and of whom it was generally believed that he parodied, before an audience of his boon companions, the dreadful ravings of his father's delirium.

Another serious infirmity was Fox's recklessness in debate. If he had been gifted with Pitt's sangfroid, his elaborate caution, his habit of feeling his way to the mind of the House of Commons, he would have avoided some of his chief embarrassments. He carried his heart on his sleeve, whilst Pitt left it doubtful whether he had a heart at all. No one who has read the debates of the critical days of the winter of 1783–84, or those of the great emergency of 1788, can doubt that if the art of managing the House of Commons were the sole art of politics, Pitt would have deserved all his successes, and Fox would have deserved all his failures. Pitt never lost his composure, and his skill and patient tact carried him through the most formidable difficulties, whereas Fox, a great debater but not a great Parliamentary leader, threw away all his tactical advantages by his impetuous blunders. In this respect, it is true, Fox himself was not as great an offender as Burke, whose intemperate outbursts cost his party dear. In that pandemonium of folly and unworthy plausibilities, the Whigs' championship of the Prince of Wales on the Regency Bill, Burke was more reckless than anyone else, and everyone knows how on another occasion, Fox and Sheridan had to pull him down by his coat-tails when his fury was making a bad cause worse. It is important to remember Burke's character for ungovernable passion in debate, because the Whig leaders' neglect of him in all the Cabinets they formed, and the more numerous Cabinets they meditated forming, is one of the standing mysteries of the age. Is it to be attributed to that aristocratic exclusiveness which always hung about the Rockinghams as a party, and

which Burke himself after all defended and praised more than most men? Or is it due to the retinue of troublesome adventurers that formed Burke's train? Or is it to be explained on this very ground of Burke's rebellious and headstrong temper, his habit of flinging himself recklessly into the midst of indiscretions and angry follies, his impracticability as a colleague, his aversions from those bargains with inferior minds that are the necessary condition of concerted action in public affairs?

There is another characteristic not only of Fox, but of his times, that must not be overlooked in considering his pretensions to the gifts that are necessary to a leader. It is obvious that the success and the ominous and alarming consequences of the King's system of destroying parties, and the slowly-won doctrine of ministerial responsibility had a great psychological effect on the statesmen of the day. Fox was always haunted by the spectacle of Chatham's captivity and humiliation, that dreadful predicament of the Government of 1766, in which the most masterful statesman in England was like a man striking blows, and giving orders in his sleep, paralysed, bewildered, and powerless. Burke and Fox had their own remedy for that evil, and these pages attempt to show that the great Coalition was not an act of faction, but a legitimate, if ill-advised application of that remedy. To men living in that atmosphere of Court intrigue two things seemed imperative, to restore and regenerate the party system, and to form one day an overwhelming administration able to defy and crush the King's conspiracies. Fox never took his eyes off that second method, and it led him into certain grave tactical mistakes. Throughout his career he was dominated by the notion that if once he could form a strong Ministry, he would give to English government a certain permanence and dignity in the eyes of Europe, and to the royal party its deathblow. Twice during North's Ministry there were suggestions of an accommodation with the Opposition, and in the first case Fox was clearly in favour of coming to terms. His letter to Rockingham in

January 1779, and Richmond's letter to him of the following month, throw a very interesting light both on Fox's views of what was wanted, and also on his relations with the Rockingham party of which he was still formally independent.[1] Richmond's letter defending the refusal of the Rockinghams to entertain the rather shadowy overtures made by the agents of the Ministry is clear and convincing, and it is mournful to reflect how that resolute opponent of the Court learnt afterwards to embrace an illiberal and tyrannical policy.

The letter Fox wrote to Rockingham shows how strongly he felt that by taking office, and eliminating what Grattan would have called the "notorious consciences," the Rockinghams might obtain the control of policy. "You think you can best serve the country by continuing in a fruitless opposition; I think it impossible to serve it at all but by coming into power, and go even so far as to think it irreconcilable with the duty of a public man to refuse it, if offered to him in a manner consistent with his private honour, and so as to enable him to form fair hopes of doing essential service." This was Fox's opinion in 1779, and it was his opinion in the crisis of 1783. One ground of it was undoubtedly a natural self-confidence. Fox was no lounger or trifler in office: he never touched a card when he was a Whig Minister, and he threw himself into his administrative duties with a zeal and a punctuality that were infectious. He was the best informed politician on foreign affairs, and his despatches, his diplomacy, and his letter to Frederick in 1784, are all characterised by great judgment and knowledge. It was not unreasonable for Fox to fancy that, with his commanding gifts, he would be the virtual master of a ministry of accommodations. At any rate that overwhelming desire to form an effective ministry, a desire that must be considered in relation to the tactics and the conspiracies of the Court, explains Fox's readiness to think of a compromise in 1779, his coalition with North in 1783, and the very mischievous mistake he made in 1806 of incorporating

[1] *Memorials and Correspondence*, vol. i. pp. 207, 213.

Addington and the Chief Justice in his Cabinet—in the one case a politician of contrary principles, in the other an official who ought clearly never to be identified with the Executive Government. Horner did not exaggerate when he called the nomination of Ellenborough to a seat in the Cabinet, a "foul stain" on the new system of government.

Many persons would argue that there was a force stronger than any of these in the elements that opposed and barred Fox's political career. They would say that he offended national sentiment mortally. It is true Fox never represented popular opinion. His doctrine of Parliamentary control of the King was not the doctrine of his own times, and in their resistance to that extreme theory Shelburne and Pitt had the general opinion of the nation behind them. But the alienation of public sentiment from Fox is often exaggerated. It is sometimes suggested that Fox's heroic opposition to the war with the French Revolution had destroyed the power of his school of Whigs for a generation. Fox was of course for a time in sharp conflict with the mass of English opinion. A man who towers above a rabble of those passions that break through the "light sleep of revenge" cannot expect to become the idol of the nation. To hold the public confidence in 1794, a statesman had to humour the fable that England and Scotland were in mortal danger from domestic disaffection; he had to accept all the arbitrary ideas of government that terror had set free from their prison-house of obscurity and neglect; he had to catch up and invigorate all the rabid and bloody phrases that belonged to a crusade for religion and the sacredness of social order, and the awe men felt for their customs and their habits, when they thought themselves on the verge of the annihilating unknown. At a time when Burke held it a dishonour to England that French prisoners should be taken alive, it is easy to imagine what ferocity men drew in with their breath in common life. Not all the prizes of heaven and earth would have compensated Fox for such a transformation of his nature. He

could not lower his tone or abate his splendid anger. But it is not true to say that Fox had doomed himself or his party to lifelong impotence by that valiant sincerity. When Pitt died in 1806 it was not to Windham, the apostle of Burke, or to Grenville, Pitt's right hand in the tyranny of 1794, or to Addington, the favourite of the Court, that men looked for the defence of England: it was to Fox, the leader of that forlorn minority in 1794. The country, as Romilly said, had already recovered from its delusion about him, and the poem Wordsworth wrote during Fox's last illness is a lasting record of the emotions with which men who had rejected his opinions mourned the loss of a great power in England. There is little doubt that if Fox had lived, he would have played the part Pitt had played in the earlier war; he would have rallied and concentrated the national resolution and tenacity for the great struggle with Napoleon, and he would have done it without proscribing freedom abroad, or silencing it at home. Lord Holland's misplaced admiration for Napoleon, and the behaviour of certain Whigs during the great war after Fox's death have made many persons forget that Fox, anxious as he rightly was for peace in 1806, was only ready to make peace on conditions that he thought would secure England against Napoleon's designs, and that there was no struggle in which his whole heart would have been more consistently engaged than the great struggle of the Peninsular War.

Fox's place in English history does not depend on the changes and chances of office and popularity. There has been no career less adapted to those summary verdicts of juries that look only at legislative achievements and the reigns of Ministers, than the career of the great Liberal, who was thirty-seven years in politics, and about as many weeks in effective power. If English history owed nothing to his championship of reform, it would still be infinitely the richer for his fidelity to conviction, and for a courage that was invincible and erect. His constancy to great

causes, a quality never too common in politics, was a quality of sovereign virtue in Fox's day. Pitt's career was largely a career of apostacies; and however vividly the conditions that palliated those apostacies are remembered, it is obvious that the continual spectacle of plausible desertions is not particularly favourable to public integrity. It is difficult to maintain a high tone in those popular discussions that in the best circumstances tend to find the lower level of party convenience, when the first statesman of the day holds to office through a series of retreats and recantations. To recall the sinister memories of the combinations and stratagems of party amongst the men who came before Fox and Burke, and then remember how strong and lofty a civic spirit animated Fox's sense of party, with its loyal adherence to great principles, is to understand how much the sincerity of English politics owes to his example.

It is not too much to say that Fox did more than any man of his century to raise the standard of courage and duty in our public life. His resistance to Pitt during the closing years of the century must always command the admiration of the most enthusiastic adherents of his great rival's policy, and his letters show what a burden of sorrow and despair that struggle imposed on him. Nothing could be more false than to argue that Fox was in politics, as in private life, a gambler, sustained and flattered in the crash of his ambitions by some dancing thought of the somersaults of sudden fortune. It is clear from his letters that he was aware of having consigned his career, not to the chance of the die, but to a destiny as relentless as Nature's laws. A beaten minority has usually the consolation of knowing that, if its immediate hopes are gone, it can still serve its country by handing on a proud tradition of political courage, that becomes in time the common inheritance of England. Fox was denied that consolation, for he believed that Pitt's policy was finally destroying freedom in England, and that the tradition of his struggle would be to future

generations just what Cicero's was to Imperial Rome. These things alone would give a grandeur to his long resistance; but to fathom the depths of his bitter hatred of the policy he fought against, we must remember that he was pre-eminently English. He was not, like Turgot, and some of the great figures of that great century, one in whom the brotherhood of man, and the expansive hopes of human progress made faint and dim the border-lines of country. There has been no man in whom the love of country and the love of freedom were more passionately blended. In his buoyant hopes of the Revolution he delighted to fancy that France was following in the steps of England. He wished for reform and for the redress of wrong, to give to all his countrymen a share in his own enthusiasm for the distinctive civilisation of England. He had urged England to give the American colonies their freedom as the voluntary recognition of their rights, and not as part of some bargain in which the foreigner had a hand. He had struggled to make her record in India clean, and to make her name bright with the glory of the emancipation of slaves. The French Revolution meant for him not only the fall of despotism, but the fall of a dynasty, whose hatred of England had produced an insomnia of intrigue in Europe.

In a situation as desolate as could be, Fox never faltered, for whatever he lacked, he never lacked courage. He remained true to his conscience under conditions in which many men of no mean calibre fail, and of those conditions it is worth while to give an example. There is no obligation which is harsher or more painful than the obligation to rebuke an act or a policy of violent injustice in a servant of the nation who is in the midst of danger and anxious responsibility. Fox and Burke did not shrink from that great ordeal, when Rodney, by his exactions and cruelties in St. Eustatius, brought discredit on the flag that he had carried often and bravely to victory. The men who can rise, as they rose, to the full height of that terrible duty are very rare at all times and in all nations, and statesmen who are

fearless in every other crisis, will prefer to flatter crime rather than forfeit their popularity in such a cause. Alike in the case of Rodney's misconduct, and in that of the misconduct of a greater man than Rodney at Naples, Fox gave lasting and indisputable proof that his love for England's honour was stern and unyielding, and not merely that gossamer patriotism which floats very prettily in the sunlight, and disappears with the first rustle of popular ill-will.

Fox had his limitations, his omissions, his indolences. He lived in the midst of many hardships and injustices, that excited his sympathy, without stirring him to patient and unflagging exertion, and there were flagrant anomalies, particularly in the administration of justice, lying outside the arena of politics, which he was content to leave there with only a passing remonstrance. He never raised his voice against the rule of the squire which was stifling the civic spirit in the country, and with all his enthusiasm for a more popular system of government, he never applied his mind industriously to the great problem of Parliamentary reform. But with all these shortcomings he remains one of the chief heroes in the gallery of English freedom. There was scarcely a reforming movement in which he did not play his part. He was the great protagonist of constitutional freedom in its long and chequered struggle with a crafty king. He did more than any other important statesman to extend the range and improve the spirit of public discussion, and to create a vigilant public opinion. He struck a powerful blow at corrupt and clandestine government. He left to a party that had inherited bad memories of religious proscription an ideal of absolute toleration. If he stood apart from the visions of the democrats, he had a great conception of the state as based on a wide citizenship, the attribute of personal independence, and he transformed the Whig principles of Locke into a system compatible with a genuine democracy. Except for three years when he renounced the struggle, he never allowed tyranny a bloodless victory over the most obscure of his countrymen, and

it was he more than any other man who, through a famine of all the generous enthusiasms of England, kept alive the idea of English freedom as something splendid and very hardly won.

But his achievements in the cause of domestic freedom were eclipsed by what he did to inspire a nobler sentiment in relation to foreign rule. The century he lived in was marked by a great increase in England's responsibilities as a ruling nation, and it was marked too by the rise of a spirit in England that rebelled against a merely selfish and tyrannical instinct of rule, mitigated by reluctant concessions to the persevering discontent or turbulence of the governed. Two movements helped to enlarge the horizon of political sympathy: one was the emergence of a great economic truth, the other was a moral revolution. The philosophy of trade which Adam Smith imported from France, and illuminated with his special genius, a philosophy even more remarkable for its political corollaries than its economic theorems, went to the very foundations of the established ideas about proprietary colonies. When it is remembered that Chatham said he would not allow a nail to be made in America without the leave of the English Parliament, and that Chatham's son learnt from Adam Smith that the energy and prosperity of one country are not injurious but beneficial to other countries, it is easy to see how the old selfish view of possessions was shaken to its very depths by the economic revolution. Pitt's name is associated with that revolution as the statesman who attempted to give it effect in legislation, and however little freedom has to thank him for, his splendid service to the fostering of enlightened notions on commerce is established beyond question or cavil.

Fox has no share in those triumphs over ignorance and prejudice. He never quite threw off the fallacies of Protection, and the best thing Pitt did for his country was done under the blazing fire of Fox's misapplied eloquence. But in the second great revolution he was the chief actor.

If it is human nature, as Bentham says, to love power more than liberty, few men can make of their own passion for liberty the spell Fox cast over men's minds, or answer as he could, the proud rhapsodies of conquest with the prouder rhapsodies of justice. There was something creative in the fierce energy with which he loved justice and freedom. It was not to fatigue or to failure or to fear that he appealed; he never made freedom a second-best, a policy of indolence or despair; he gave it a pride and a fascinating splendour, and amid the worst misfortunes of his party, he defended that cause, not with chastened apologies but with a stalwart defiance. What good reason is there, a contemporary of Fox might ask, why we should not use our acquisitions solely for our own selfish ends, bind them by commercial exclusions, and proclaim that our will is paramount wherever we have the power to make and hold conquests? There is one good reason, Pitt would have replied, and that is that the best way to foster trade and industry at home is to foster trade and industry in your colonies, and that to shut out competition from your markets abroad is to shut out customers from your markets at home. There is one good reason, Fox would have answered, the reason that rule which is merely the exercise of force is barbarous; that to link your country's name with a system of tyranny is to link it with something which is infamous and brittle and short-lived, and that the value of government depends precisely on its capacity to give expression and independence to the genius and the character of the governed.

In Fox's great defences of reform, of religious toleration, of the extension of the franchise, this doctrine is always emerging. In his mind respect for personality implied respect for nationality; and to strangle the self-government of Ireland was as much a barbarism as to strangle the personal liberties of Englishmen by a sudden tyranny. He never forgot in speaking to Englishmen, that he spoke to men who were rulers, and exposed to the temptations of rulers. The dread of those temptations

haunted his mind. Many men of his day regarded the coming democracy as the Garden of the Hesperides, and the era of spontaneous justice between peoples. It would be fanciful to suppose that Euripides' admirer had assimilated the spirit of sorrow and disillusionment in which the exiled poet watched the sad sunset of Athenian glory, but at any rate Fox nursed no daydreams of millenniums and the summary flight of the evil forces of human nature. To him even democracy was a doubtful dawn, streaked with the red menace of the tempests and convulsions of human passion. Fox, like his disciple, Horner, hated the whole race of conquerors, and to him conquest was no less abhorrent if it were the act of a democracy, than if it were the act of a dynasty. He was not one of those who think of all dominion as romantic, and are satisfied that democracy gains from it a larger range of vision, and a sublimity of spirit, and an exhilarating sentiment of sacred and scattered kinship throughout the world. Fox knew to what a hazard all that is fine in character is put the moment men and nations exult in the feeling that they hold an inexorable grip on the freedom of other peoples, and that their own pomp and importance in the world are the only things that stand between some subject population and the expression and development of its character. The events of Fox's lifetime all over the world were a standing warning of the difficulty of making men feel the wrongs they inflict as keenly as they feel the wrongs they suffer. The history of India in his day was a standing warning that whilst men talked of governing dependencies by the public opinion of England, they often governed them by private and fragmentary interests, and that these direct interests bore down all the pressure of a spasmodic enthusiasm for justice and good government. The career of such men as Clare and Castlereagh was a monument to the truth that nations only govern white peoples by taking into partnership what is worst in the governed, by arming all the baser passions against the popular will, and fostering all the elements that

are ready to become part of a well-paid system of usurpation and violent misrule. Fox saw all around him the portents of the havoc domination plays with the character of the governing people; a school to mould states in the sensations of mastery, and arbitrary power.

He saw too that if anything else than force was to rule the world, the main business of diplomacy must cease to be an exchange of peoples. He was the first great English statesman to extend to politics the doctrine of nationalism, to give a general application to the idea of national self-expression, to see—where other statesmen saw only the passive aggregates of accident or conquest — communities not incapable of a corporate will, and owning collective traditions and other bonds besides obedience to a common sovereign. His one Sybil was an imaginative patriotism. For him a national civilisation was sacred because it represented the genius and the will of the people who made it. Alone in Europe, he upheld that doctrine throughout the French war; he upheld it when it was violated by our allies in Poland, by our enemy in Switzerland and Holland, and by ourselves in proscribing the Revolutionary order in France. It was a doctrine that was odious to the dominant temper, and treasonable in the eyes of a Government that meditated prosecuting Fox, but contented itself with striking his name off the Privy Council. But it was the doctrine that inspired English policy for many generations after Fox's death; and one of Fox's bitterest opponents in his lifetime is chiefly remembered in English history because he adopted Fox's principles in the Greek War of Independence. It is idle to talk of the career in which the most beneficent principle of foreign relations that struggled slowly into recognition during the nineteenth century, the right of a nation to be its own master, was first proclaimed by a great English statesman, as if it were sterile and profitless, and a mere brilliant apparition across the stage of public affairs. Fox was the valiant friend of freedom, justice, and equal law at home, but his name is still more

illustrious because in a nation with great and distant possessions, with subjects dependent on the precarious mercy of their unknown rulers, his arm was always uplifted for the defenceless, and he never watched in a pale silence or a smothered anger the applause or the consummation of a public wrong.

CHAPTER II

FOX AND THE KING

The real nature of the struggle between the King and the Whigs. The King's system. His successes. His treatment of the first Rockingham Ministry. Chatham's behaviour. His Government. His breakdown. His resignation. North's Ministry. The difficulties of the Opposition. The differences between Chatham and the Rockinghams. Fox's attachment to the Rockinghams. Their programme laid down by Burke (1) an attack on corruption, (2) the control of the King. The history of the Economy Agitation, 1779 to 1782. The years of public embarrassment and catastrophe. The victory of the Rockinghams in 1782. The great achievements of their brief Ministry.

THE first two Georges, who spoke in broken English and left their hearts in Hanover, might have been summoned to the throne expressly by Providence, in order to enable Walpole to lay the foundations of Parliamentary Government in England. Their infirmities fitted them to play to perfection a mute, but an invaluable part, in the development of the Constitution. The third George cast himself, or found himself cast by Bolingbroke for a more active rôle. His predecessors had been content to govern Hanover, and to reign over the domestic affairs of England. George III. meant to be an English ruler; no lay figure in the development of Parliamentary Government, but its formidable antagonist and competitor; the tyrant, and not the doge of the Cabinet. He set himself to acquire a power he had not inherited, when he inherited the rather empty splendour of the Crown, and Nature, whilst withholding from him every gift of statesmanship, had enriched him with a combination

of qualities that were of sovereign value in the pursuit of such an object. He was English born, he was pious, he was austerely proper, he husbanded for his one end in life, by a frugal respectability, all the popular favour his fathers had wasted on their pleasures; he had craft, perseverance, and all the secrets of a pliant flattery; he had no private vice that could alienate his people, and no public virtue that could bar the meaner avenues to his ambition. What patriotism, or the love of justice, or friendship, or all the glitter of less noble passions was to others, that was autocracy to George III.

The struggle of a political party with such a king might easily have been rather squalid and ignoble, a dreary contest for selfish and private supremacies never raised above the level of sordid retaliations and frivolous chagrins. If the only question at issue was whether the king, or a small coterie of patrician families should distribute the prizes of a political power that meant little more than an array of sinecures, jobs, and instruments of plunder, it could scarcely be said that humanity was much the richer, or much the poorer for the triumphs of either. The names of the great Whig houses were not remembered for the protection of the poor, or the disarming of corruption, or the championship of public integrity. Office had been their object, not because they saw in it an opportunity of serving their country, or of achieving some great and necessary reform, but mainly because they wished to see their own friends rather than the friends of others quartered on the public funds. But the grand struggle between George and his opponents was no mock battle of phantom principles between a grasping ruler on one side, and a handful of Bedfords, or Sandwiches, or Gowers on the other. It was a struggle between a ruler whose whole system of government was corruption, deceit, and the elimination of all public interest and control and a set of men who were resolved to cleanse the public administration, and to place the final authority in the hands of a Parliament that acknowledged its supreme responsibility to the nation.

It was in this party, the party led by Rockingham, and created by Edmund Burke as far as a party is created by ideas and the magnificence of a luminous indignation, that Fox's career as a Liberal began. He first acted with that party, soon after his final separation from Lord North's Ministry, and in a few years he was one of its leaders.[1] It was a new party. If Burke had been told it was a new party he would have been outraged, for, like all reformers, he loved to picture his reform as a return to the normal and the recovery of an old simplicity from the misgrowths and perversions with which it was overlaid. This temper was particularly characteristic of the Whigs. Fox lived to plead great causes, which the Whigs of tradition had never dreamt of, and still he liked to fancy himself in the strictest line of succession, and to trace his ancestry to the Revolution of 1688. It is not surprising that Burke, in impeaching the new system of government, saw the advantages of that dramatic rehabilitation of the past, which is one of the first devices of rhetoric. He might contrast, without fear, the results of the most selfish of Whig administrations with the ruinous consequences that had followed the appropriation of the Whig stock-in-trade by George III., for the new ruler had borrowed all that was vicious in the system of party, and none of its compensating virtues. If the Whigs had mastered the art of binding men to their interests by mercenary considerations, George was not one whit less accomplished in corruption, and his range was still more extended. If the Whigs had rested constitutional liberty on a party connection not always very sublime in its attachments or very generous in its range, George meant to establish clandestine government on the very foundations

[1] Note Fox's *Correspondence*, vol. iii. p. 199. "It is a sad thing, My dear Young One, to come young and vigorous into an old, worn-out, jaded opposition: however if you can in any degree *rajeunir* it you will do in my opinion the greatest possible service to the country. I did this in some degree with the Rockinghams, but then every circumstance was as favourable to me, as it is otherwise to you" (Feb. 1802). Fox first voted with the Whigs in opposition to the Boston Port Bill, April 19, 1774.

of bribery and court favour. The Whig theory as restated by Burke was, it is true, a theory of patrician government; it implied an almost superstitious reverence for the precise plan of the existing Constitution; it attached a ridiculous importance to hereditary rank, but it admitted the restraints of a public vigilance, it insisted on public integrity, it was animated by a high sense of honour, and of duty, and it did much to develop the spirit of public discussion. George, against whom this theory was invoked, was a caricature of Bolingbroke's patriot king. He was not a monarch of the order that uses the central power to protect the many from the insolence and oppression of the governing few; he did not stand on some lofty eminence, high above the selfishness and the ignorance of his subjects. Of all the sovereigns in Europe who cherished political ambitions there was scarcely one who was less capable and not one who was more bigoted. Throughout the reign, the royal closet was always the safe refuge of every mean prejudice, that had been stripped and routed in discussion, and for every Englishman who cared for freedom or justice or public right or a wise tolerance, George was himself the first dragon to be slain. Burke and his confederates fought his pretensions with that supreme energy with which men fight to prevent the maladies of one generation from becoming the diseases of the next, and not with the sporadic efforts of a faction which finds its privileges challenged, and the paltry prizes of office in danger.

The Rockingham party had a hard task before it. The atmosphere of public life was dim and misty, and there was no strong tradition of party discipline or party success to compete with the precedents the King had created, or to disperse the oppressive confusion and disorder of ideas. For twenty years, with one brief and rather ineffectual interruption, the King's new system had governed politics, and during those twenty years the great majority of politicians had at one time or another lent themselves, consciously or unconsciously, to his plausible designs. From

1761 to 1765 the King had ruled through Bute and Grenville. He had forced the peace of Paris on the country by means of unprecedented bribery, and had asserted his authority with a temerity that did not stop short of dismissing soldiers from their places because they disapproved of the peace. For one year (July 1765 to 1766) the Government had been conducted on other principles. Rockingham had been made Prime Minister, because the King was piqued by Grenville and Pitt had refused to form a Ministry without Temple who was himself pledged to Grenville. The first Rockingham Ministry did three important things in spite of the King. It carried a condemnation of general warrants; it restored the officials who had been dismissed on account of their opposition to the peace; and it repealed the Stamp Act. The last great measure was unfortunately accompanied by the Declaratory Act, asserting the right of England to tax America, a concession to English opinion which Mr. Lecky considers was indispensable.

The Rockingham Ministry in the circumstances of its birth, its life, and its death was merely a concrete illustration of the strength of the King's system. Its great weakness from the first was the absence of Pitt. It was the supreme necessity of the moment that Pitt should join the Ministry, and yet the most lavish concessions left him aloof and constrained. He agreed with the policy of the Government; he could have held any position he liked, and he rejected all overtures with an unconcealed and irritable suspicion.[1] Rockingham never forgave him, and Pitt's conduct in that crisis is probably the explanation of Burke's lasting dislike. This great public catastrophe may be explained on various grounds. If individuals have no virtues, said Junius, their vices may be of use to us. No master of intrigue ever excelled George in the art of marshalling even the virtues of public men in the great army of public vices

[1] "Confidence," he said, "is a plant of slow growth in an aged bosom; youth is the season of credulity."

that rallied to his banner. Pitt had no taste for the smaller booties, and the tiny pomps, by which George won and kept his faithful servants, but his gorgeous vanity revelling in the buoyant consciousness of his importance was betrayed by a natural and just contempt for the whole system of family connections into a fatal allegiance to the King's plan. The cry of the dissolution of parties was the common cry of the King and of Pitt. To the King it meant ministries eclectic, incoherent, and docile: to Pitt it meant the overthrow of the domination of a few proud, selfish houses, and the rule of sheer talent and popularity. When Burke was busy making straight lines in politics, separating men and forces by the definite distinction of opinion, Pitt saw nothing but the faint and dingy boundaries of family selfishness, and the disappointment of crestfallen factions. A miraculous combination of tact and good luck had thrown into the King's arms the one man who could really have destroyed him, the man whom he dreaded, as he afterwards came to dread Fox.

In its career no less than in this misfortune that blighted its origin, the Rockingham Ministry reflects the influence of the King's policy. The most powerful statesman was kept out of the Ministry by the lustre of the new cry against the government of great families. The Ministry itself was overthrown by agents whose services were enlisted by a glamour of a very different kind. George, who did everything that flattery and a prodigal distribution of patronage could do, to make office a bed of roses for his favourites, spared no pains to make it a bed of brambles for Ministers he disliked. He refused to create peers; he encouraged insubordination in the Ministry; and he brought into the field against his own Ministers all the energies of the King's friends. He allowed Lord Strange to spread the report that he was opposed to the repeal of the Stamp Act; the Chancellor and the Secretary of War, besides twelve of the King's household voted against that repeal, and the actual dismissal of the Ministry had been pre-

ceded by the open revolt of the Chancellor. The King's behaviour to Rockingham's second Ministry, and to the Coalition was a mere revival of the arts he had employed against Rockingham's first Government.

The Government that succeeded was a Government after the King's own heart. It included men from all parties. The King's friends held several strongholds; Conway left the Rockingham party to join it; Grafton, who became Minister of War, had already revolted from that party; Shelburne and Barré were closely attached to Pitt; Camden, who had taken the popular side in the Wilkes case, and opposed the coercion of America, sat side by side with North, who was a brilliant advocate of the Court; Pitt became Chatham, and soon learnt from bitter experience that there are ties more stifling than those of party, and that to make a Government miscellaneous is not necessarily to make it independent.[1] If the King had ruled the elements, his enterprises could not have prospered more steadily. Chatham, stripped of most of Pitt's popularity, lost his health, the vigour if not the sanity of his judgment, and all but the semblance of control, and his colleagues, who had opposed him whilst he was still active, used the periods of an inscrutable silence, which began in a theatrical and morbid mystery, and ended in mortal paralysis, to do and to tolerate everything that Chatham himself would most strenuously have resisted. A Minister who had made his name dreaded on the heroic stage of the conflicts of Europe, was now reduced to a scramble for power with his own mediocre colleagues. In Chatham's Government all Pitt's qualities became diminutive, and his giant authority something tottering and fragile. Prussia rejected his overtures for an alliance; France forgot her terrors and annexed Corsica; with Pitt still nominally a King's Minister, Townshend carried his Act for taxing America, and the House of Commons declared its vote could exclude Wilkes per-

[1] Burke might have had a seat in the Board of Trade, but he remained faithful to Rockingham.

manently from Parliament. In his wildest moments the King would never have hoped that under the ægis and fading glory of Pitt's name he could accomplish all the projects that Pitt had so valiantly obstructed.

Chatham only recovered his health to resign, and by one method or another, the Whig element in the Ministry was reduced, and the Court influence strengthened. Shelburne and other friends of Chatham disappeared to make way for the recognised champions of the Court, and when Grafton retired in 1770 he was succeeded by North, an adroit and skilful defender of everything that was precious to George. Chatham was by this time disillusioned, and had taken into active opposition what credit still clung to the memories of Pitt; the calamities of the nation were growing; there was a palpable decay of national credit and power abroad, at home there was acute dissatisfaction in the country, in Parliament a fiery attack, in the Cabinet not a single commanding name, and yet the Court maintained its ascendency for the next twelve years. That fact alone is the best measure of the strength and tenacity of the system which the Rockingham party meant to destroy.

The vicious supremacy of the Court which George had gradually built up, using all the materials at his disposal, the venality of one man, the social vanity of another, the pride or the public spirit of a third, was not the only obstacle to the success of the Rockingham party. The walled city was strong and powerful. The forces available for attack were not united. There were certain differences between Chatham, even the disillusioned Chatham, and the Rockingham Whigs. Chatham's daydream of a sublime patriotism dissolving all the lesser attachments and allegiances of politics and creating a powerful and independent Ministry was become something of a nightmare to a man who had served for two years in Grafton's Government, and had known that the dissolution of parties meant the consolidation of Court power. But neither party could bestow on the other an unequivocal confidence. To the Rockinghams, though Burke

had transformed the Whig creed and illuminated it with the radiant colours of a new public spirit, brushing out all the mere emblems of patrician houses, family connections were still an important and respectable part of the constitution; the old musty alliances were not abolished, but they were transfigured into an association for great public ends; to Chatham they were at the best what Voltaire said of the French land laws, the rubbish of a Gothic building fallen to ruins. A demagogue in the true and best sense of the word, Chatham was never on terms of a cordial alliance with the Rockinghams, whose sympathy with democracy was very limited.[1] He was much more public spirited than the Rockinghams over the Irish Absentee Tax. He despised their reliance on high-born hegemonies in politics; he rebelled against their moderation of tone and tactics,[2] and in spite of the mortifications he had suffered in the Government in which the King like Dædalus had constructed an inextricable labyrinth to bewilder his energies and dissipate his popularity, he never accepted their central doctrine of a strict discipline of party, designed to overawe the Court.

It can easily be understood that the fastidious Rockinghams, on their side, felt some qualms about the noisy rhetoricians who rubbed shoulders with Chatham, and some diffidence, in the crusade against the Crown, about the sincerity of a statesman who had deserted the Whigs in the great crisis of 1765. Chatham as a leader had as many uncertain humours as Pompey, and the letters of Rockingham show how difficult it was to concert measures with a statesman of his imperious moods, his whimsical and sudden temper, his massive and lonely arrogance. Born to win battles rather than campaigns Chatham had enough

[1] In 1770 Chatham had urged Rockingham to aim at strengthening the democratic element in the Constitution (Lecky, vol. iii. p. 381).

[2] "The Marquess," he wrote, "is an honest and honourable man, but moderation moderation is the burden of the song among the body. For myself I am resolved to be in earnest for the public and shall be a scarecrow of violence to the gentle warblers of the grove, the moderate Whigs, and temperate statesmen."

courage to assail a Government, and rebuke a people, but he had never learnt to observe or to enforce discipline. What was wanted if the Court influence was to be subdued was an energy, sustained and organised, carefully drilled and harnessed, and not the energy that swept with the lawless and ephemeral violence of a mighty storm. Hence it was that although as early as 1770 there was an alliance of all the sections of opposition against the Court, Chatham again and again exhibited this fundamental incapacity to act methodically with a party: an incapacity of which he gave a signal proof in January 1775 when he introduced a motion for the removal of the troops from Boston without giving the Rockinghams any notice whatever of his intentions.[1] Where there ought to have been a united and vigorous assault on the colonial policy and the domestic corruptions of the Court, there was an opposition that was fitful and fragmentary and unstable, interrupted once by a secession from Parliament, and only concentrated at rare intervals for particular ends.[2] This disruption of forces was evident enough even when the Chatham and the Rockingham parties were agreed. On some important measures they differed openly, as they differed on the propriety of recognising the independence of America. Thus when the acute struggle, in which Fox took part, occurred between the King and the Rockingham party, the King had three supreme advantages. His power was strongly laid from the mere fact that he had governed by corruption and intrigue so many years; the Opposition were disunited and bewildered, neither Chatham nor Shelburne who succeeded him ever forming a cordial alliance with the Rockinghams; and the American

[1] Albemarle, *Life of Rockingham*, vol. ii. p. 264.

[2] Sir G. Savile's description, Nov. 1777, Albemarle, vol. ii. p. 323: "I say nothing of our *paralytic* state, on which you know my sentiments, and which is of itself sufficient to determine my judgment. You will know what I mean by the palsy when I describe it to be of that very peculiar and whimsical kind that when one side would move, the other is struck motionless; and when the latter is disposed to be vigorous and active, then the fit seizes the former; and this sweet vicissitude is certain, constant, regular, and has lasted years."

War had reinforced the King's power with the popular passion for coercing the rebels.[1]

The Rockingham party itself was divided on many questions, and Fox's views of Parliamentary reform were far more in agreement with those of Chatham than they were with those of his intimate allies. But the party was for the time compact in opposition to the King, on a practical programme. It resolved the general condition of the struggle into two supreme issues. The first was the establishment of the doctrine that Ministers were responsible to Parliament; the second, the destruction of the apparatus of corruption, by which the King made himself the master of Parliament, and in a large degree, of the constituencies. The House of Commons, as Erskine put it some years later, instead of being a control upon the Crown, was become the great engine of its power. To give it its due position in the Constitution it was indispensable, first of all to destroy and disarm the faction, known as the King's friends, and to put into office a Ministry, resolved to hold its own against royal pressure, and to uphold the supremacy of Parliament; secondly, to make Parliament itself the embodiment of public spirit, and not the mere instrument of the King's pleasure. It was the King's policy to nullify the public control over Parliament as well as the control of Parliament over Government, to obtain a Parliament unconnected with the people, and a Ministry unconnected with Parliament. It was this temper that had made him play such a strenuous part in the long contest between Wilkes and the House of Commons, whilst the best description of his methods is to be found in *Thoughts on the Present Discontent.* "It behoves the people of England to consider how the House of Commons under the operation of these

[1] Fox's opinion of the strength of the anti-American feeling: "Do not expect to find any change in politics when you arrive, for if you do, you will be most certainly disappointed. I can find nobody of our side but Lord Camden and Burke, who agree with me in desponding, but depend upon it we are right. We are and ever shall be as much proscribed as ever the Jacobites were formerly" (Letter to Fitzpatrick, *War in America*, Feb. 1778).

examples must of necessity be constituted. On the side of the Court will be, all honours, offices, emoluments, every sort of personal gratification to avarice or vanity; and what is of more moment to most gentlemen, the means of growing by innumerable petty services to individuals, into a spreading interest for their country. On the other hand, let us suppose a person unconnected with the Court, and in opposition to its system. For his own person, no office, or emolument, or title; no promotion ecclesiastical, or civil, or military, or naval, for children, or brothers, or kindred. In vain an expiring interest in a borough calls for offices, or small livings, for the children of mayors, and aldermen, and capital burgesses. His court rival has them all. He can do an infinite number of acts of generosity and kindness, and even of public spirit. He can procure indemnity from quarters. He can procure advantages in trade. He can get pardon for offences. He can obtain a thousand favours, and avert a thousand evils. He may, while he betrays every valuable interest of the kingdom, be a benefactor, a patron, a father, a guardian angel to his borough. The unfortunate independent member has nothing to offer, but harsh refusal, or pitiful excuse, or despondent representation of a hopeless interest. Except from his private fortune, in which he may be equalled, perhaps exceeded, by his Court competitor, he has no way of showing any one good quality, or of making a single friend."[1]

[1] Examples of the active part taken by the King in bribery, both in Parliament and outside, are given by Erskine May, *e.g.*, Letter to Lord North on 1st March 1781: "Mr. Robinson sent me the list of the speakers last night, and of the very good majority. I have this morning sent him £6000, to be placed to the same purpose, as the sum transmitted on the 21st of August." Again, 16th October 1779, he writes: "If the Duke of Northumberland requires some gold pills for the Election, it would be wrong not to satisfy him." Letter to Lord North, 17th April 1782: "As to the immense expense of the General Election, it has quite surprised me: the sum is at least double what was expended on any other General Election since I came to the throne." Lord North replies: "If Lord North had thought that the expense attending elections and re-elections in the years 1779, 1780, and 1781 would have amounted to £72,000, he certainly would not have advised his Majesty to have embarked in any such

The best description of the method by which the King tried to make himself the master of Parliament, by establishing a dual administration, is also to be found in *Thoughts on the Present Discontent.* "A Minister of State will sometimes keep himself totally estranged from all his colleagues; will differ from them in their counsels, will privately traverse, and publicly oppose their measures, he will however continue in his employment. Instead of suffering any mark of displeasure, he will be distinguished by an unbounded profusion of court rewards and caresses; because he does what is expected, and all that is expected, from men in office. He helps to keep some form of administration in being, and keeps it at the same time as weak and divided as possible." The King, in fine, was become a distinct party in the State. Over weak Ministers he was paramount; in the constituencies his power was enormous, and in Parliament he was represented and obeyed directly by the faction known as the "King's Friends."

Burke and Fox were not agreed in 1779, any more than they were at any other time in their lives, as to the proper method to secure the public and responsible character of Parliament. Fox spoke and voted consistently for Parliamentary Reform, and Burke spoke and voted as consistently against it. But Burke, Fox, Rockingham, and Richmond were all agreed on an immediate method of attack, a measure to check corruption; and Burke, though he held the senatorial theory of the House of Commons, was ready and eager to stimulate popular discussion in favour of such a reform, on the ground that this was a crisis that demanded the interposition of the nation. For the second evil, the remedy was summed up in Burke's language, "Government may in a great measure be restored, if any considerable bodies of men have honesty and resolution enough never to

expense." And he proceeded to explain the reasons, which had induced him to spend £5000 at Bristol, £8000 at Westminster, £4000 in Surrey, £4000 in the City of London, and how the last General Election had altogether cost the Crown £50,000 as well as certain pensions.

accept administration unless the garrison of King's men, which is stationed, as in a citadel, to control and enslave it, be entirely broken and disbanded, and every work they have thrown up be levelled with the ground. The disposition of public men to keep this corps together, and to act under it, or to co-operate with it, is a touchstone by which every administration ought in future to be judged." So Burke had written in 1770, and his words are the best interpretation of much that happened thirteen and fourteen years later.

The history of the three years from 1779 to 1782 is largely the history of this reform agitation in the country. Its importance can scarcely be overestimated, as a symptom or as an influence in British politics.[1] Not only was it the most impressive, the most general, and the most nearly spontaneous of the public agitations of the eighteenth century; it created the momentum that was needed to carry the great reforms of 1782, and it made public discussion a new power in England. The agitation began with a meeting in York at the end of the year 1779, at which, after a long and open discussion, it was resolved to present a petition to Parliament in favour of economy. The petitioners "observed with grief, that notwithstanding the calamitous and impoverished condition of the nation, much public money had been improvidently squandered, that many individuals enjoyed sinecure places, efficient places with exorbitant emoluments, and pensions unmerited by public service to a large and still increasing amount, whence the Crown had acquired a great and unconstitutional influence, which, if not checked, might soon prove fatal to the liberties of this country. . . . They therefore appealing to the justice of the Commons, most earnestly requested, before any new burdens were laid upon the country, effectual measures might be taken by that House to inquire into and correct the gross abuses in the expenditure of public money, to reduce all exorbitant emoluments, to rescind and abolish all sinecure places and

[1] The details of this agitation I have taken from the useful work of Mr. Jephson, *The History of the Platform.*

unmerited pensions, and to appropriate the produce to the necessities of the State."

This Petition put into vigorous language precisely that sense of public danger which the Rockingham party had set itself to excite in the nation, and it limited its programme to the remedies in support of which that party was united. The adoption of the Petition was followed by a second important and startling event. The meeting decided to form a Committee "to carry on the necessary correspondence for effectually promoting the object of the Petition, and to prepare a plan of an Association on legal and constitutional grounds to support that laudable reform, and such other measures as may conduce to restore the freedom of Parliament." Other meetings soon followed. A county meeting for Hampshire was held at Winchester immediately after the York meeting, and a few days later a most influential meeting of the nobility, gentry, clergy and freeholders of the County of Middlesex was held at Hackney, adopted a Petition in the terms of the Yorkshire Petition, and decided to establish a Committee to correspond with the Associations of other counties, and to open communications immediately with the County of York. In Wiltshire Shelburne and Fox were amongst the speakers, and Fox summed up the whole spirit of the agitation in one sentence, when he declared, that though he had made very many public speeches, this was the first time he had spoken to an uncorrupt assembly. The Yorks Petition was also adopted at County meetings in Surrey, Essex, Cumberland, Dorset, Gloucestershire, and Sussex, where the Duke of Richmond called the meeting himself because the Sheriff refused. But the most important meeting of all was held in Westminster Hall, February 1780, when Fox presided over a large and influential assembly, which included besides Burke, the Duke of Portland, the Cavendishes, Wilkes and Townshend. The meeting is historical, for it was the occasion on which Fox was first proposed as the future candidate for Westminster. This series of meetings made a profound impression on the Court

and Parliament, and their importance was brought home to the House of Commons, when petitions for economical reform and honest government were presented from twenty-six counties in England, three in Wales, and from several considerable cities.

Fox and Burke were as active in Parliament as they had been in the country. Both of them made important speeches during the debates on the Petitions, and Burke drew up an elaborate plan of economical reform which was to serve the two great public purposes of retrenchment and the abolition of the sinecures by which the King maintained his corrupt influence. It is a striking illustration of the salutary alarm which the campaign had produced, that Burke actually carried the second reading of a Bill to give effect to his plan, though the Bill was lost in Committee. A still more imposing manifestation was decided on by the Reform party, and in February a joint scheme was arranged for collecting delegates in London from the various county Associations, to confer together and impress Parliament.[1] These delegates met frequently during March. The day on which the House of Commons was to take the Petitions into consideration was marked by a great speech from Fox to the Petitioners at Westminster, and the same evening the first great triumph of the Reform party was won, and Dunning's famous motion, "That the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished," was carried by a majority of eighteen, and the House of Commons resolved that it was their duty "to provide, as far as may be, an immediate and effectual redress of the abuses complained of in the Petitions presented to this House from the different Counties, Cities, and Towns in the Kingdom."

The new party had won a striking victory. Within less than a year from the opening of the campaign, with its full array of meetings and petitions, they had terrified a venal House of Commons into a protest against the system of royal rapine and secret tyranny, on which many of its members

[1] Sheridan was one of these delegates.

depended for their places, and not a few for their livelihood. Two events occurred to check this triumphant progress; one was the explosion of the Gordon riots, the other the rapid and embarrassing growth of the programme of the Associations. The sinister consequences of the terror created by the inflammatory fanaticism of the Protestant Associations, and the imbecile weakness of Lord North's Government, were felt throughout the rest of the reign of George III. They certainly contributed to the panic of 1792–1793, and their immediate result was to discredit all forms of popular agitation and concerted action, a result so marked and well defined that the Government were even suspected of refraining deliberately from a prompt suppression of disorder, with the object of creating a general prejudice against every form of political combination that was meant to bring pressure upon Parliament. The other cause of the sudden depression of the hopes of the new party was the more ambitious policy pursued by some of the delegates, who proceeded to supplement their programme of economical reform by demanding annual Parliaments and fuller popular representation, with the result that several counties seceded, and the Rockingham Whigs found policies on which they were fundamentally divided thrust into the forefront of the agitation. The movement for reform was no longer concentrated, and men who had been awed into a momentary submission before its energies were dispersed, recovered their courage and determined to stand by their iniquitous prizes. Thus it happened that though the Rockingham party had made the House of Commons pledge itself to reform in April 1780, it could not hold Parliament to that promise, and at the election in the same year, at which the King was particularly active, and particularly lavish, a House of Commons was returned, of which Horace Walpole wrote, "There are several new Members, but no novelty in style or totality of votes. The Court may have what number it chooses to buy."

In spite of these considerable disappointments the Reform party persisted in its attacks, and Fox and Burke

relaxed nothing of their resolute efforts. In 1781 Petitions for economical reform were presented from nine Counties, and from the City of Westminster.[1] The motion in the House of Commons to refer the Petitions to a Committee of the whole House was rejected, and the agitation for reform was lost in the general dismay over the growing disasters abroad. At last the pressure of the accumulated calamities of years of mismanagement, and of that supine incompetence which was a direct result of the King's influence became intolerable and irresistible. Lord North was driven from office by votes of censure which he could no longer defy; an event the importance of which can only be appreciated when it is remembered that almost every Ministry that went out of office during the next thirty years, succumbed not to the displeasure of Parliament, but to the displeasure of the King. The formation of a Government by Rockingham in 1782 was not merely the climax, it was the direct result of the series of efforts in the country and in Parliament, by which Burke and Fox had struggled to destroy the fatal supremacy of the King. That struggle had obliged the King to choose as his Ministers men who were publicly pledged to destroy his corrupt authority, and it had created in the country so strong and indignant a public spirit, that the King could not hope to secure a more amenable House of Commons by a dissolution of Parliament.

The new Government was divided and shortlived, but it accomplished with some modifications one-half of the dual policy of the Rockingham party. It carried three great measures for making Parliament honest and independent: the first a Bill for excluding contractors from the House of Commons; the second a Bill for disfranchising Revenue Officers; and the third an abridged version of Burke's original scheme of economical reform. Each of these measures was a striking achievement, and taken together,

[1] It was Fox who moved the adoption of the Petition at a public meeting in Westminster.

they form a Herculean record of prompt and energetic action in the face of a great public evil. The task was no easy one. To the King on his throne, to his creatures in Parliament, to his instruments in the Ministry, the charters of corruption were almost the only parts of the Parliamentary system that were congenial, and they were sacred. The House of Lords attempted to blunt the edge of the Contractors' Bill, but Fox stood manfully by the threatened clauses, and obliged the Lords to give way. In the case of Burke's measure of economical reform, the King was more successful, and it was due to his strong remonstrances that the original dimensions of the Bill were considerably reduced. But the programme as it was actually carried was a gigantic reform. The Contractors' Bill struck a fatal blow at a very deadly form of corruption within and without the House of Commons.[1] The Bill for disfranchising Revenue Officers, disfranchised a number of men who had the most direct interest in keeping the Government in office, and who constituted, according to one account, a fifth part of the total electorate of the country.[2] Rockingham stated in the House of Lords that seventy elections chiefly depended on the votes of Revenue Officers. Burke's measure of economical reform, which effected a saving of more than £72,000 a year, limited the secret service money expended in the kingdom to £10,000, and abolished more than forty sinecures, usually held by Members of Parliament. "It also provided that until the pension list should be reduced to

[1] "Lucrative contracts for the public service necessarily increased by the American War were found a convenient mode of enriching political supporters. A contract to supply rum or beef for the navy, was as great a prize for a member as a share in a loan or lottery. This species of reward was particularly acceptable to the commercial members of the House. Nor were its attractions confined to the members who enjoyed the contracts. Constituents being allowed to participate in their profits were zealous in supporting Government candidates" (Erskine May, *Constitutional History of England*, vol. i. p. 387).

[2] According to one account, the Revenue Officers amounted to 40,000 or 60,000 out of a total electorate of 300,000. The disqualification was removed in 1868, when the proportion of Revenue Officers to the whole body of voters had become insignificant.

£90,000, no pension above £300 a year should be granted; that the whole amount of pensions bestowed in any year should not exceed £600, a list of which was directed to be laid before Parliament; that the entire pension list should afterwards be restricted to £95,000; that no pension to any one person should exceed £1200."[1] The Rockingham Ministry lasted three months, but few Ministries, as Mr. Lecky remarks, have done so much to elevate and to purify English political life. It had proved the sincerity of that great agitation in which Fox first became the comrade of Burke, by carrying three great measures for reducing the purchasing power of the Crown, and for withdrawing politics from the eager market of a spurious and mercenary loyalty.

Note 1.—It is only fair to add that these measures of the Rockingham Ministry, all of which were supported by Pitt, were supplemented by a great reform accomplished by Fox's rival in 1784. Before that time Ministers were in the habit of distributing beneficial shares and lottery tickets under the market price among their private friends and the Parliamentary supporters of the Government. Two flagrant examples of this practice occurred under Bute and Lord North. The second case, which occurred in 1781, was the subject of very vehement accusations by Rockingham, Fox, and Burke; Rockingham stating that "the loan was made merely for the purpose of corrupting the Parliament to support a wicked, impolitic, and ruinous war." When Lord North raised another loan in the following year, he adopted a system of close subscriptions. When Pitt was Prime Minister in 1784, he finally abolished the system of distributing shares in a loan. "When he desired to contract a loan, he gave public notice in the City through the Bank of England, that he would receive sealed proposals from all who wished to send them, and in order to guard against all partiality, they were opened in the presence of the Governor and Deputy-Governor of the Bank" (Lecky, *Hist. of Eng.*,

[1] Erskine May, vol. i. p. 258.

vol. v. p. 292). Mr. Lecky points out that Pitt is very much to be blamed for the prodigal use he made of another method of rewarding party services, the creation of peers. When he resigned office in 1801, he had created, or promoted upwards of 140 peers.

Note 2.—The Irish Pension List remained unregulated down to 1793, when it had reached a sum of £124,000. The hereditary revenues of the Crown in Ireland amounted to £275,000, and were of course at the disposal of the Crown and largely employed for corrupt purposes. As early as 1757 the Irish House of Commons had unanimously protested against the amount of the public revenue spent on Pensions. The Pension List was fixed in 1793 at £174,000, and reduced twenty years later to £80,000. It is interesting to notice that the entire Pension List for the United Kingdom is now £75,000.

CHAPTER III

FOX AND THE KING

The internal weakness of the Government due to Shelburne's position. Rockingham's death. Resignation of Burke and Fox as a protest against the King's influence in the Cabinet. The Coalition. The motives that prompted it. The real issue the King's authority. The King's control of Pitt in vital issues throughout his career. Fox right in his aims but wrong in his tactics. The public bewildered and suspicious. The Coalition Government and the India Bill. The great débacle of March 1784. Fox's account of his motives in 1796. Demoralising effect of the struggle alike on Pitt and on the Rockinghams.

UNHAPPILY the Rockingham party which had succeeded brilliantly in one great object of its campaign had been baffled in the other; it had struck a great blow at the corrupt influence of the Crown but it had not struck a fatal blow at the power the King exercised over his Ministries. It soon became clear that the reformers who had stormed the Cabinet were not its masters. The King was on stronger ground in resisting the effort to create an independent Ministry able to maintain itself against the pressure direct and indirect of the Court than he was in resisting the agitation against his system of Parliamentary bribery. The one struggle went on before the footlights; the other behind the scenes. The power of the popular indignation and alarm which Fox and Burke had developed and directed, like some newly discovered engine, against the organised abuses of the King's system, was a battering-ram in the hands of a party that was busy assailing all the outworks and defences of corruption and patronage; but that

occult tyranny which depended on the King's dexterity in controlling and estranging Ministers was something beyond the reach of its resounding blows. If public spirit gave the reformers the advantage in attacking the one form of court influence, the King's training in craft and intrigue, his long experience, his knowledge of the weaknesses of his Ministers, gave him the supreme advantage in defending the other. The spectacle Rockingham's administration presents in Parliament is a spectacle of the rapid and ruthless destruction of a rotten system that was very dear to the King; the spectacle it presents in the Cabinet is that of the triumphs of a nimble diplomacy which had explored and made its own all the vast range of the meaner motives of human nature.

From the day of the formation of the Rockingham Government, Shelburne enjoyed an influence that was incompatible with that strict unanimity in coercing the King which Burke had demanded as the condition of the restoration of political stability. For Shelburne as for Chatham the system which the King had tried to create, under which he kept his Ministries disintegrated, and hoped to divide and break up every body of collective opinion, possessed a certain fatal fascination. Both statesmen had the same weakness for a system that was dependent on the dissolution of parties, and the incoherence of Ministries. The King was wise enough when North was driven from office to send for Chatham's follower. Shelburne refused to form a Ministry and advised the King to send for Rockingham. Eventually Rockingham was invited to become Prime Minister, not directly by the King but through the agency of Shelburne. Rockingham, after some hesitation, agreed. The King had gained his first point, and the Rockingham party had made its first mistake in accepting Shelburne as its agent. Shelburne made himself Secretary of State; he put one of his followers, Dunning, into the Cabinet without consulting Rockingham, and he arranged with the King that Thurlow, the King's docile Chancellor, should remain in office. As

Fox truly said, it was clear that the Ministry was made up of two parts, one belonging to the King, and the other to the people. The discrepancies became more acute as time went on. The Chancellor stoutly resisted in the Cabinet and in the Lords all the Rockingham programme of economical reform. One of the Lords' amendments to the Contractors' Bill was actually moved by Dunning, whilst Thurlow took an open and conspicuous part in opposing the Bill, and Shelburne to the general astonishment was particularly friendly to Thurlow though he supported the Bill. On another occasion there were violent recriminations in the Lords between two members of the Government, Thurlow and Richmond. Both Shelburne and Thurlow again did their best to restrict Burke's Bill in the Cabinet, and instead of the united and resolute body forcing reform on the Court, which Burke and Fox had hoped for, the Cabinet was a divided body in which the King's interests were persistently upheld by a minority. Rockingham was Prime Minister, but it was to Shelburne that the King gave his confidence, communicating to him not only his disapproval of the Rockingham measures but his dislike of Rockingham's person. In such a situation it is not surprising that Fox wrote as early as April the 28th to Fitzpatrick, " Provided we can stay in long enough to have given a good stout blow to the influence of the Crown, I do not think it much signifies how soon we go out after, and leave him (Shelburne) and the Chancellor to make such a Government as they can, and this I think we shall be able to do."

The King had already evaded the calamity that had once seemed imminent; a united and compact Ministry. But the measure of his good fortune was still incomplete. Two months after Fox wrote to Fitzpatrick the letter quoted above, Rockingham was on his deathbed; Shelburne, the King's confidant and ally, became Prime Minister and the Rockingham party was scattered. Fox and Burke, the two greatest men in the party, left the Government; so did Lord John Cavendish, Portland, Sheridan, Althorp, Duncannon,

Townshend, and Lea; but Richmond, Keppel, and Conway remained. Only a few years before the King had talked of retreating to Hanover, and now his enemies who had stormed the Cabinet with drums beating and flags flying, and had seemed so near to victory were themselves broken and dispersed in precipitate confusion. A further disruption was to follow. The section of the Rockingham party which followed Fox into opposition was divided once again on the coalition between Fox and North, and the elements of the strong combination against the King's influence which had been so powerful and formidable in 1780 had dissipated their strength in two great party crises within two years. The King, it is true, was obliged to accept a Government in which Fox was paramount in 1782, but he got rid of it by means of a characteristic act of perfidy, and he upheld Pitt who took office when the Coalition Ministry was dismissed, in an unconstitutional defiance of the House of Commons. Fox's prediction in 1782 that the King was relying with reason on Pitt to revive his old system came true. Pitt acted in 1783 and 1784 as the King's instrument, and extricated him from the danger of another submission to a strong and distasteful Ministry. The difference between the situation in 1780 and 1783 was that the King in withstanding the principles for which the Rockingham party contended had against him in 1780 all the strength of popular suspicion and indignation, whilst in 1783 those forces were on his side. The skill of the King, and the mistakes of his opponents had transferred the allegiance of public opinion from the Whigs to the Court. The Crown after a succession of bewildering surprises and public misfortunes had emerged from its strenuous contest with something of the prestige of the character Bolingbroke had assigned to it, and which the King had done nothing to earn. Its opponents, after striking one important blow, emerged with their reputations dimmed and their strength wasted in a poisonous climate of suspicion.

The part Fox played in these momentous changes has been very severely condemned. His motive throughout seems

to be quite clear and unequivocal. If he had stayed in Shelburne's Government he would have frittered away his strength in an ineffectual opposition to forces that he could not hope to master, and he would have lent the authority of his name to a Government which he believed to be merely another instance of the King's system. Keppel who remained at the time resigned in January 1783, and Richmond, whilst he condemned Fox's action, complained repeatedly of Shelburne's conduct as a colleague. Shelburne was influential enough as a Secretary of State in Rockingham's lifetime. He had induced Rockingham to agree to the grant of certain pensions to his friends, an act that injured very substantially the credit and the moral authority of an Administration which came into office with the cry of economical reform. He had obstructed the very designs that belonged fundamentally to the political mission of the Ministry. He had been counted on confidently by the King as the means of dissolving the formidable power of the Rockingham party within the Ministry. "From the language of Mr. Fitzpatrick it would seem that Lord Shelburne has no chance of being able to coalesce with Mr. Fox. It may not be necessary to remove him at once; but if Lord Shelburne accepts the head of the Treasury, and is succeeded by Mr. Pitt as Secretary for the Home Department and British Dominions then it will be seen how far he will submit to it. The quarrelling with the rest of the party as a party would not be wise." Shelburne as a Secretary of State had been able to thwart and disable the Rockingham Ministry, and Fox had already resolved to resign before Rockingham's death; as Prime Minister he would have been irresistible. Fox himself was convinced that resignation was his duty. "I have done right, I am sure I have, . . . I am sure my staying would have been a means of deceiving the public and betraying my party, and these are things not to be done for the sake of any supposed temporary good."[1]

The second step taken by Fox was still more momentous,

[1] *Buckingham Papers*, i. 55.

and it has been blamed much more severely. His secession left the House of Commons with three parties: Shelburne's party, reinforced now by William Pitt, North's party, and Fox's party. Shelburne made attempts to coalesce with each of the other two parties, and Pitt himself waited on Fox to ask the terms on which his alliance might be secured. Fox replied, very properly, that he would never serve under Shelburne. Shelburne's negotiations with North's followers, though not with North himself, were actually proceeding when Fox and North were brought into communication, with the result that the famous Coalition was formed, and Fox and North together drove the Shelburne Government out of office.

In taking this second step Fox's motive is again quite intelligible. A coalition with Shelburne was out of the question. To have remained as an active or passive supporter of Shelburne was only possible if Fox believed there was a greater calamity to the state than the continuance in office of a Ministry which he regarded as the King's instrument. There is no reason to doubt that Fox was perfectly sincere when he said to Grafton upon Rockingham's death that he was convinced that Shelburne was as fully devoted to the views of the Court as Lord North ever had been. The central fact of the political situation in 1783 was that it was not a policy but a system that Fox and Burke were opposing. Their first duty, they believed, was to destroy that system. If they had been merely resolved to oppose a particular concrete policy, they could have afforded to wait until that policy was matured. But the system which they were attacking grew stronger with every hour that it survived. Shelburne's Government was weak. But no one had thought Lord North's Government could live in 1770, and it took twelve years to turn it out of office. Burke and Fox were not merely anxious to carry particular reforms; they believed that it was fundamentally necessary, if England was to have honest and stable government, to make it impossible for a Ministry to hold office if it was

merely a King's Ministry. That issue was to them the supreme issue in 1783. Was the condition of things under which the King had ruled through Bute and Grenville, undermined Rockingham's first Government, collected and destroyed all the talent he could inveigle into the Grafton Government, ruled again through twelve years of disaster and disgrace by means of North's docile weakness, and thwarted and broken up the Whig Government forced on him in 1782, to continue or to disappear? Shelburne was openly protesting that he could never consent that the King of England should be a King of the Mahrattas, and the whole plan of his administration was precisely the plan Burke and Fox had set out to destroy.

To destroy that system Fox allied with North. An alliance in one sense, it was in another a capitulation, for Fox and Burke retained their original scheme, and North agreed to it. North, in other words, lent his services and his influence to the enterprise on which Fox and Burke were resolved, and that enterprise was the destruction of the system under which North's own Ministry had been established and kept in office. If the object of Fox and Burke had been some object on which North was opposed to them, and they had sacrified that object to achieve office, their conduct would have deserved the blackest name. If it had been some policy which North did not accept at heart, and which he accepted outwardly for the sake of office, his conduct would be inexcusable. As it is, neither pique, nor ambition, nor the mean avarice of revenge need be invoked to explain a partnership for a common object of public importance. The one object on which North could act with Fox and Burke was precisely the object those statesmen had set before them some years earlier. The Rockingham party had meant to destroy the royal power in Government, and if that was taken as the dividing line in politics, North in the temper in which he was in 1783 was a proper and legitimate ally. To Burke and Fox that one issue was the dividing line. To destroy that influence they had laboured during

North's Ministry; they had struggled during Rockingham's; they had resigned office rather than be creatures of Shelburne's. They renounced no doctrine, they broke no pledge, they abandoned no object of public policy when they allied themselves with North in order to create an administration of the kind they had outlined several years before as the first need of the country.

Before discussing the considerations so strong, as it turned out in the event, as to be paramount in condemnation of that momentous alliance, it is pertinent to notice some important facts that are essential to understanding Fox's conduct. First of all, no alliance was possible with Pitt or Shelburne. Each of these statesmen agreed with Fox on Parliamentary Reform, but Pitt, who had never accepted the Rockingham principle of subduing the King, was a steadfast colleague to Shelburne, and Shelburne was now the opponent of that principle. The Coalition Government acted steadily and strenuously on its professed principle. The King's most successful manœuvre in adulterating the strong anti-prerogative character of the Rockingham Ministry had been his arrangement with Shelburne to leave in the Government a foreign and corrosive element in the person of the unscrupulous Thurlow. The Coalition was strong enough to eliminate that sinister figure, and the Ministry was famous, if on no other ground, as the only Ministry between 1778–1792, in which Thurlow had to practise his intrigues in private life. Thurlow reappeared with Pitt's first Ministry. Fox vindicated absolutely his own sincerity by refusing to accept Thurlow for a colleague as the price of the King's favour. The Government carried through the House of Commons a great measure for abolishing a flagrant abuse in the most important field of England's foreign responsibilities, and it carried that measure against the King's wishes. Fox's Coalition Ministry did not, like Pitt's Ministries, surrender important measures to the King's influence. It was beaten by the King's intrigue in the Lords, and the unpardonable readiness of Pitt as Leader of the Opposition to become

an accessory, after the act, of that flagrant and despotic use of court influence.

Secondly, how does Fox's belief in 1783 that the supreme necessity of the hour was to reduce the King's power to a mere semblance of control, look in the light of the subsequent history of the reign? It is sometimes said that the King really lost his battle against the principle of Parliamentary control, though he won his battle against the Coalition. Pitt, it is urged, though he came into power by asserting as full blooded a doctrine of the royal prerogative as any Tory ever cherished, was in practice too strong for the King, and the King's Government ceased, only to be resumed during the Ministry of his incapable and idolised Addington. This is surely a misconception of the real meaning of the crusade against the King's influence. The Rockinghams had at least carried one great measure which the King hated. Did Pitt, who was Prime Minister for nearly twenty years, carry a single measure that the King hated? He effected some splendid reforms in finance, but the only finance the King cared about was the sort of finance that the Rockinghams had dealt with in 1782, when they had sent tumbling all his fabric of corruption. Pitt might make commercial treaties or remit taxation, or introduce Free Trade. His achievements in regard to all these are celebrated enough, but as long as he moved on such fields, the King neither cared nor understood what he was doing. But whatever Pitt's authority within certain boundaries, he was always at the end of a chain; confronted with any wrong or infamy that George treasured, his energies were captive. In 1782 Pitt was a vehement champion of Parliamentary Reform. He held office for twenty years without abolishing a single anomaly or enfranchising a single Englishman. He was a strenuous enemy of the Slave Trade, but during his long lease of unexampled power he struck at it with half-measures, and yet Fox in the four months of his pre-occupied administration whilst the sands of his life were running out, and his natural force abating, destroyed that

trade for ever with one blow of his flashing broadsword. Pitt knew in 1801 that Catholic Emancipation was vital to the contentment of Ireland, and to the safety of the Empire. Yet so far was he from carrying that indispensable reform that after resigning office conscientiously because the King was against it, he offered within a month to resume office on the understanding that he would never raise the subject again, and he actually opposed the petition for Catholic Emancipation in 1804.

Pitt did many things which the King regarded with the unintelligent indifference with which he would have watched the experiments of an astronomer; he did others, such as making war on France, and suffocating free speech at home, which the King loved, as he loved anything that was stamped with his own royal hatred of liberty; he carried not a single reform that the King disliked.[1]

Fox's view in 1783, that the first thing to be done in English politics was to abolish the King's influence, was completely justified by the history of Pitt's Ministry, for in that Ministry the King had as absolute a veto on reform as if his Minister had been a Bute instead of a Pitt, a well-drilled and well-fed servant instead of one of the three greatest men in politics with a mind and a will of his own. For the King was paramount just when and where his influence in the exclusion of persons or policies was fatal. In 1804 the King, and the King alone, prevented the creation of the strongest Government English politics could provide. The crisis in 1804 was very different from the crisis in 1792 when Pitt blandly promised himself a short war and a rapid triumph. Napoleon was almost at the height of his pinnacled power. Pitt knew that it was indispensable to collect all the available strength into the Government, and he proposed to form a Ministry in which he should take the Treasury, Fox and Fitzwilliam should be

[1] Note that Canning argued in 1801 against yielding to the King on Catholic Emancipation and staying in office, on the ground that so many concessions had already been made.

the Secretaries of State, Grey Secretary of War, and Grenville President of the Council. To this arrangement Fox agreed. But the King was just as ready in 1804 as he had been in 1775 to subordinate the safety of England to his own masterful passions and resentments. In the American War he declared that no thought of the country would make him accept Chatham as Minister. In 1804 he would have let Napoleon do his worst rather than make Fox a Secretary of State. The King knew very well how to play on Pitt's personal vanity, and he combined flattery with menace, and appealed to his compassion. He agreed to accept Grenville but stood out against Fox. Fox urged Grenville and his friends to take office under Pitt, absolving Grenville from all personal obligations, but Grenville refused, and Pitt, his strength already waning under his long years of office, had to scrape together for as grave a crisis as an English Minister ever had to face, a Ministry of Nobodies. That hour, full of dreadful omens for a man of Pitt's patriotism, like that other hour when the use of the manœuvre that had killed other reforming Ministries broke up Pitt's project of Catholic Emancipation, was a terrible retribution for his conduct in 1783. But it was not only Pitt, and not only the England of Pitt's day that paid dearly for leaving the supreme power of veto to a King who laid a heavy hand on all the enthusiasms that rose above the surface of selfish prejudice. As we trace the history of that demon which has pursued two nations, draining like some malignant vampire the life-blood of Ireland, and the public honour of England for a hundred years, it is impossible not to recollect with some bitter impatience that hour in which the mistakes of a set of politicians and the vanity of a young statesman combined to give to a tyrannical and improvident Court the final voice in the affairs of the nation.

On this view Fox and Burke were right and Pitt was wrong in their estimates of the first public necessity of 1783. But if Pitt mistook the end, or deliberately pursued the wrong end, Fox mistook the means to the right end, with

results that are one of the saddest tragedies of history. Whilst Fox obtained by the Coalition a majority in the House of Commons, and further not merely a loyal and amenable, but also a very capable colleague, he lost the one weapon that was indispensable to him, the public confidence he had won by five years of incessant and courageous opposition to the Court. To Fox and Burke it was more important than it was to any other statesmen to keep very close to the public temper and to carry with them the popular confidence at every step. That reciprocal confidence was the secret of their power. They had done more than any other two men to create and sustain that great public agitation which is described in an earlier chapter; they had made of public opinion a new and formidable force, and without that weapon, weighted as they were with equivocal traditions of party, they would have been powerless in the face of the resources and the mercenaries of the Court. By the Coalition Fox received reinforcements that counted in Parliamentary battle, but he drove into the ranks of the enemy the popular opinion that was everything to him. If the King's power was to be destroyed, the support of popular opinion was essential to the crusaders. By the Coalition that support was not merely alienated, it was actually transferred to the King.

Everyone of the phases through which Fox's quarrel with Shelburne passed was unintelligible and bewildering to a public that could understand the battle over pensions and bribery but was naturally quite unable to follow those more subtle conflicts which went on behind the curtain. The public Associations in the country adjourned for a year on the formation of the Rockingham Ministry, suspending their judgment, to watch events. The pensions Shelburne induced Rockingham to give to his friends were the first shock to the full confidence of the party that had clamoured with Fox for reform and a Spartan discipline in the public service. Fox's resignation was the next shock, To the outside world it looked fractious if not

factious, and Fox was judged harshly because the materials for judgment were incomplete and misleading. Patriotism and the proprieties of the Cabinet system sealed his lips on the most serious of all the incidents that had influenced his suspicions of Shelburne, the behaviour of that Minister in regard to the paper Franklin sent him discussing the possible cession of Canada to the United States. Fox's reasons for resigning must be accepted by everyone who has followed the correspondence of those months as substantial and complete in their cumulative force, and perfectly public spirited in their quality. He was beaten in the Cabinet on the question of the spontaneous recognition of the independence of the United States, a matter that he regarded as vital; he had not been treated with the confidence due to him as a colleague by Shelburne, whose conduct in replying to an informal note from Franklin, without consulting anyone in the Cabinet but Dunning was censured as warmly by Richmond as by Fox, and he believed rightly that the whole plan of coercing the Crown by a Ministry was betrayed by Shelburne's independent communications with the King.

These reasons were not only ample, they were imperative. But they were not reasons that could be displayed in their full effect to the public, and Shelburne and Pitt (who joined the Ministry when Fox left it) combined to create the impression that Fox had only seceded out of pique because Shelburne was made Prime Minister instead of the undistinguished nobleman whom Fox and his party had nominated for that office. The whole affair therefore bore a very disconcerting aspect to men who had regarded Fox as a disinterested politician, and it bore that aspect because it was presented in a twilight of mystery and false whispers. The Rockingham party, it is true, put forward Portland as their candidate for the reversion of Rockingham's office, and Pitt and Shelburne were very quick to turn that proposal to their own account by denouncing the inveterate taste of the party Whigs for government by stately mediocrities. If

the only question was the question of the comparative abilities of Shelburne and Portland, the friends of Shelburne had it all their own way. Portland was suggested, because Fox and Richmond and Burke, the three ablest men in the party, were all very obnoxious to the King, and Portland was expected to fill the rôle which Rockingham had filled with consummate success, the rôle of a titular leader for which the most important gifts were not Parliamentary ability or eloquence, but tact, address, and the art of composing the quarrels and differences of party leaders. Rockingham was a politician of very ordinary stature but he had at least kept his party intact in circumstances that put no light strain on its discipline and endurance. Fox believed rightly or wrongly that Portland had much the same nature but, when the choice was made, it helped to divide that party still further because whilst it left Fox leader in the Commons, it did not offer to Richmond, who was fully conscious of his own strong claims on the party leadership, even the secondary compensation of the leadership in the Lords.

All the conditions therefore of the first breach with Shelburne, the esoteric character of the real and very momentous controversy, and the accidental circumstances which Pitt and Shelburne craftily pushed into the foreground, and represented as the governing issues contrived to give to a secession, which was prompted by public and honourable motives, the air of a rather frivolous and arid quarrel. The next event, the Coalition, gave a still greater shock to the public confidence in Fox. There had been coalitions before 1783, and coalitions in which the most discordant politicians had taken office together. Twenty years later, it was generally believed to be not merely reasonable but actually a thing to be desired that Fox and Pitt should combine in forming a Ministry, though their opposition had been so bitter that Fox had declared that Pitt's shameful assaults on all the liberties of Englishmen had made violent resistance a question of prudence

and not of morality. Why was it then that the alliance between Fox and North staggered public opinion? The answer is to be found in the nature of the moral influence on which Fox had founded his public position. Most of the great political battles of the day were fought in Parliament. Fox and his friends had organised their attack outside. They had made not merely the House of Commons, but the public platform ring with the crimes and follies of North's Government, and the whole system that made them possible. And for the public Associations that had listened to Fox's Philippics, the American War with all its losses and disgraces, the defiance of the people, and the corruption of Parliament were summed up and personified in the statesman with whom Fox allied himself to attack Shelburne. All the forces of evil, against which Fox had led them, were identified in the eyes of the Associations, not with some impalpable and abstract system, but with the concrete career, the personal character of North. Fox and Burke forgot what a powerful and what a delicate weapon they had constructed. To explain the new strategy in some amiable phrase such as "amicitiæ sempiternæ, inimicitiæ placabiles," to justify it by parading North's loyalty as a colleague, to defend it by accusing men of whom the public knew no more than that they had served in a Ministry which had carried great economical reforms, might have passed as reasonable apologies amongst the initiated, to the outside public they were a combination of simpering pique and of unprincipled and unabashed ambition.[1] The horror excited by the coalition of 1783[2] is itself a signal proof of the success with which Fox had

[1] The moral effect of the Coalition is seen in the *History of the Two Acts*, xxxiii.

"From that unhappy moment, we may date that want of confidence in public men of all parties which is often expressed in terms not very guarded, in the public meetings and resolutions of those who assemble to consider of grievances or to suggest remedies."

[2] It is significant that Adam Smith, a friend of Shelburne, approved Fox's conduct in both crises.

made great political issues plain and tangible to the public, and was in itself, therefore, an unwelcome compliment to the energies of the great platform campaign.

A certain odium attached again to the Coalition on account of the concrete issue of the attack. Fox's criticisms of the peace were doubtless sincere and perfectly intelligible. As Foreign Minister he had formed his own plans for strengthening England's position in negotiating, and if necessary for carrying on the war with France, Spain, and Holland. The first step to be taken in his opinion was the unconditional and unqualified acknowledgment of American independence; on that point he was ready to make instantaneous and complete surrender; on all others he was disposed to drive a stubborn bargain. Shelburne's general idea was precisely the counterpart. Fox thought that, if the war went on, it would be an advantage to England to have recognised the independence of America. Shelburne thought that, by that acknowledgment, England would have given away in advance one of her main diplomatic weapons. Shelburne on the other hand was far more ready than Fox to make concessions on other matters: at one time he was not disinclined to surrender Gibraltar, a contingency Fox regarded with indignation and alarm. There were already growing up the two schools of foreign policy; the one, of which Fox was the leader, favourable to an alliance with the Northern Powers against the Bourbon Powers; the other, represented afterwards by Shelburne and Pitt, jealous of the Russian advance, and more inclined to act in concert with France. Hence Fox and Shelburne when they were in office together looked with different eyes on the negotiations. When the preliminaries of peace were published Fox objected to them on two grounds; he thought a better peace might have been obtained, and he thought the King's system of government was to blame for the peace. It is now known that Vergennes thought seriously that if Fox came into power before the preliminaries were concluded, he would continue the war

with France. Fox condemned the peace quite sincerely, and to argue that his opposition was factious on the ground that he concluded a peace when he was Foreign Secretary in the Coalition Ministry, without substantial alterations, is to forget that the preliminaries were binding. Fox certainly got better terms in detail for England than the terms he criticised, but it was impossible for him to reopen the negotiations. North again could conscientiously criticise the terms of peace. He believed that it was possible to rescue the American loyalists from the vengeance of their countrymen, and though that is a belief which most persons nowadays, knowing the efforts made not only by Shelburne but also by Vergennes, will reject, there is nothing to suggest that North's indignation was hypocritical. But when Fox and North combined to censure the peace, however genuine their motives might be, their action inevitably bore a rather invidious appearance to men who remembered how often Fox had accused North of wearing out the strength of the nation in a dishonourable war, and thought that if the peace was a reproach to England, the stigma of it belonged to Fox's ally rather than to his opponents.

These circumstances all helped to alienate popular support from Fox by wrapping round him mystery and suspicion. Yet Fox and Lord John Cavendish were both re-elected without opposition when the Coalition Ministry was formed, and the King never thought of dissolving Parliament as a possible means of escape from that Ministry, two facts which show conclusively that there was as yet nothing like the popular tumult of anger and distrust which was to sweep the Whigs to the four winds in the following spring. But the Ministry, compact and loyal to its main object, had not behind it the weight of popular opinion that it needed for an encounter with the King and his battalions. Burke's mishap over the two clerks who had been rightly dismissed by Barré, the effects of which were not quite obliterated by all Fox's adroit handling of an awkward situation, helped to increase the public misgiving; the grave mistake of asking for a great

revenue for the Prince of Wales was a further aggravation, and Pitt turned that diffidence to good account, as soon as Fox's celebrated India Bill was introduced. The Bill itself was a great and daring measure for dealing with a gigantic evil, but Pitt chose his ground for attacking it with a single eye to the prejudices the Coalition had excited. The grandees of the India Company were a formidable body; they were supported by a great unseen army of clients and dependants, and they were reinforced by all the Corporations who dreaded the first invasion of the rights of Charters. Pitt became their champion, and he attacked the Bill as an attempt to create a permanent Whig control, and to make Fox master of an illimitable patronage. The accusation came with a bad grace from a statesman whose colleague Dundas was for eighteen years to keep Scotland friendly and well-disposed by a judicious application of Indian prizes. But the blow told just because the Coalition was not trusted by the public, and an opposition which was neither scrupulous nor public-spirited leading an army of malcontents, whose antagonism to the Bill came from their pockets, succeeded in stamping the measure as a scheme of party tyranny on the minds of an electorate that was already puzzled by the mysterious strategy of the Rockinghams.

The final catastrophe came from the Whigs themselves. When Pitt had sanctioned the King's infamous trick, had taken office with the support of the King's friends, and held it in a gross and arbitrary defiance of the House of Commons, the Opposition squandered all their resources of public indignation by the blunder they made in attacking the right of the Crown to dissolve Parliament, instead of concentrating their energies on Pitt's unwarrantable pretension to retain office against the will of the House of Commons. Fox's error in thus putting himself in the wrong is the more to be deplored, because he was careful to put himself altogether in the right in the discussion of the possibilities of compromise. During the early months of 1784 there was a general wish to put an end to the condition of Parliamentary

anarchy by forming a Ministry by arrangement between the two parties. Fox agreed to serve with Pitt, and said that Pitt might settle the question of Indian patronage as he pleased, if he would consent that the Government of India should be in England, and should be permanent for at least a given number of years. North was ready to stand aside, and to renounce all ambitions for office rather than prevent a union. But Fox first of all insisted that Pitt should acknowledge the control of Parliament by resigning, and secondly he resolutely resisted the admission of Thurlow. These stipulations were entirely honourable to Fox, and it would have been inconsistent on his part to accept anything less. Pitt by refusing his assent to them showed first of all that he put his personal vanity above the great principle of Parliamentary control, and secondly that he would be no party to eliminating the King's illicit influence. On the points in dispute Fox acted with magnanimity and with a strict regard to his public pledges, and his views of the needs of the country: Pitt cannot be acquitted of a violation of all the central principles of Parliamentary government and of condoning the King's perfidy to his Ministers. Yet what impressed the public most was that Pitt had refused to take a rich sinecure of £3000 a year, that he had defied, with a valour that recalled his father, a powerful Opposition, and that the Opposition had thundered against an appeal to the country. There followed the elections of March and the sensational collapse of the Whigs routed by as miscellaneous an army as ever took the field, the indignation of reformers, the disappointments of the Associations, the avarice and alarm of rich companies, and the triumphant agility of the King's friends.

So ended finally the great struggle, and it ended with one of the mordant and mocking sarcasms of history. The King had snatched from the most dangerous and desperate of predicaments an unearned lustre and an unexpected popularity; Pitt carried into the ranks of the King's friends the moral influence he had won as the champion of Parliamentary

Reform, and the enemy of secret influence; the Rockinghams, their laborious savings scattered in two years, went out into a dreary world of suspicion to live as common borrowers, without substance and without credit, on sorry shifts and hazards.

Lord Rosebery suggests that Fox felt throughout the rest of his career that in forming the Coalition he had done something which required defence. There is nothing in his correspondence that gives an inkling of moral remorse or misgiving, and a letter to his nephew, written twelve years later, contains a luminous record of his motives. "However except among ourselves and the few politicians who are philosophers, whether there is now any use in recurring to, or at least in dwelling much upon the transactions of 1784, I much doubt. The party which those events should have bound together for ever are now scattered and dispersed, and the bulk of mankind, always judging by effects, will consider that as a bad bond of union which has been an ineffectual one. Perhaps therefore instead of saying now that the power of the House of Commons ought to be first restored, and its constitution considered afterwards, it would be better to invert the order and say Parliament should first be reformed, and then restored to its just influence. You will observe that I state these opinions as being mine *now*, in contradistinction to those times when the Whig party was only beaten but not dispersed and when I certainly was of a different opinion."[1]

The effects of that struggle on both parties were momentous; they certainly sapped the vigour of Pitt's

[1] Sept. 1796. *Memorials and Correspondence*, vol. iii. p. 135. See also vol. iv. p. 40. "No strong confederacy since the Restoration, perhaps not before, ever did exist without the accession of obnoxious persons: Shaftesbury, Buckingham in Charles 2nd's time; Danby and many others at the time of the Revolution; after the Revolution many more, and even Sutherland himself. In our times, first the Grenvilles with Lord Rockingham, and afterwards Lord North with us. I know this last instance is always quoted against us because we were ultimately unsuccessful; but after all that can be said, it will be difficult to show when the power of the Whigs ever made so strong a struggle against the Crown, the Crown being thoroughly in earnest and exerting all its resources."—Letter to Lauderdale. April 3, 1804.

enthusiasm for Parliamentary reform, and they demoralised his opponents, whose strenuous and concentrated pursuit of very definite aims was now followed by a rather casual and haphazard existence. The energies of the party, devoted hitherto to two great objects of public policy, were frittered away for the next few years on a mistaken opposition to two great financial measures, and on the discreditable escapades of the Prince of Wales.

CHAPTER IV

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM

Pitt drops Reform after one effort in Parliament in 1785. Difference beween Pitt's view and Fox's view of Reform. Fox on the strength of Democracy. The Reform Agitation suspended. Public opinion listless. The Opposition disqualified by its heterogeneous character. With the Revolution public interest revives and a compact Opposition emerges from the quarrel between Fox and Burke. Grey's two Motions in 1793 and 1797. The difference between Fox and the Democrats. Fox against universal suffrage because it would enfranchise men who were not independent. His conception of citizenship. Was Reform urgent? The decay of the Yeoman class in England at the end of the eighteenth century.

IT was all part of the curious satire which ended the struggle between Fox and the King that the triumph in 1784 of the Minister, who had hitherto been associated more prominently with Parliamentary Reform than with any other project in politics, was to prove the worst misfortune that could overtake that infant cause. The Rockinghams who were beaten had left Parliamentary Reform an open question, Burke took one side, Fox the other; Pitt who had inherited his father's enthusiasm for the extension of the franchise, came out of the 1784 election with flying colours only they were the colours of the King. The effect of the circumstances of his victory was seen both in the House of Commons, and in the country. In Parliament Pitt was the Minister who had defended the King's prerogative, and who had royal almoners amongst his allies; in the country he was still the champion of a reform to which the King and his representatives were incurably hostile. These conditions

acted and reacted on each other, for Pitt's virtual abandonment of Parliamentary Reform was accepted by his followers in the country as a proof of the present impracticability of those reforms, whilst the silence of the Associations left the friends of Parliamentary Reform in the House of Commons without stimulus or motive power. Pitt by becoming Prime Minister had muffled the agitation more effectually than it could have been muffled by any Ministry that was avowedly hostile. If the Prime Minister of England from 1784 had been a Minister distrusted by the people, the popular agitation for Parliamentary Reform would have continued; if he had been a strong Minister who was ready to make that reform a Government measure, the reform would have been carried. As it was, Parliament remained inactive, and in the country an air of listless patience succeeded to the strenuous movements which had quickened and elevated public life a few years before.

Pitt's solitary effort on behalf of the cause that had done so much to give him his public position was made in 1785. He proposed a specific scheme of reform which was to come into operation gradually. His new scheme was quite different from the earlier scheme of 1783 when he had proposed, as his father had suggested some years earlier, the addition of a hundred knights of the shire, and of representatives of the metropolis, and further that boroughs should be disfranchised when the majority of voters were convicted of gross corruption and the innocent minority allowed to vote in the county elections. His proposal in 1785 would not have increased the size of the House of Commons. Thirty-six decayed boroughs returning seventy-two members were to be disfranchised by their own voluntary application, and a million pounds were to be set apart for compensating the disfranchised boroughs, to be distributed by a special committee of the House of Commons amongst the several persons interested in the borough. The seventy-two members returned hitherto by these boroughs were to be added to the representation of the counties and the metropolis. The gradual correction

of the anomalies in the distribution of representatives was arranged by a system, which was to be permanent, of setting aside a sum of money to compensate other boroughs as their population languished, in order to transfer their representation to growing towns which asked for a voice in Parliament. The country constituencies were to be increased by the enfranchisement of copyholders.

Fox supported Pitt in his general project, but took exception at once to two vicious principles in his scheme. He denounced the proposal to compensate the disfranchised boroughs as implying a mischievous view of the meaning of Parliamentary institutions. "There was something injurious in holding out pecuniary temptations to an Englishman to relinquish his franchise, on the one hand, and a political principle which equally forbade it on another. He was uniformly of an opinion which, though not a popular one, he was ready to aver, that the right of governing was not property, but a trust; and that whatever was given for constitutional purposes should be resumed, when those purposes should no longer be carried into effect. . . . The different parts of the plan would certainly, in a Committee, be submitted to modification and amendment: but as it now stood, admitting only the first principle, every other part, and the means taken to attain the principle, were highly objectionable. He should not hesitate to declare that he would never agree to admit the purchasing from a majority of electors the property of the whole. In this he saw so much injustice, and so much repugnance to the true spirit of our constitution, that he would not entertain the idea for a moment." One of the details again of the proposal Fox had little difficulty in demolishing. Pitt proposed that the sum set aside for compensation should accumulate until it was large enough to tempt the owner of a decayed borough to sell his interest. The effect of such a decree, as Fox pointed out, was to put a premium on retaining possession, for the longer the owner kept the borough, the richer the ultimate spoil. These

criticisms did not prevent Fox from supporting Pitt's motion for leave to bring in the Bill, but leave was refused by 248 to 174 votes. Pitt abandoned the cause, and the next time he spoke on the subject it was as the avowed enemy of Parliamentary Reform.

It is clear from Pitt's later speeches and it is expressly stated by one of his biographers, that he did not attach to Parliamentary Reform, after he had introduced his beneficent changes in regard to public loans, the importance he had attached to it in 1783 and 1784. The French Revolution made him a strenuous opponent of that reform, but long before that event his sentiments on the subject had become lukewarm and spiritless. The reason is apparent because it is part of his whole political temperament, his undivided allegiance to the plan of the British constitution as a perfect machine for governing a country easily and without disturbance. In 1783 and 1784 he saw the constitution hampered and vitiated by certain specific evils, and his remedy for those evils was the strengthening of the influences that checked public corruption and waste, and the gradual elimination of some of the elements of mischief. It was in the form of this healing measure that he first welcomed the idea of Parliamentary Reform. In 1783, 1784, and 1785 some of the abuses which he hoped to correct by means of Parliamentary Reform had disappeared, partly in consequence of the reforms of Rockingham's Ministry, partly in consequence of his own. He was now Prime Minister himself, governing without the instruments of bribery that were once the stock-in-trade of a Parliamentary leader, and he found himself able to carry at least some of the great financial reforms with which he was preoccupied. The popular discontent which had shown itself during the last years of the American War and the first years of Pitt's career had been charmed into a sanguine silence. The anarchy and confusion of those days had gone, and Pitt found that by means of his own qualities as Minister and his own reforms as an economist, he had restored to the working of the constitution the sap and

primitive vigour that he had thought could only be added to it by increasing the county representation.

Fox never made a single motion for Parliamentary Reform, and never submitted a single project. It would scarcely be accurate to say that any project was ever devised to which he gave an unqualified assent. Yet his attachment to Parliamentary Reform was far deeper, and far less adventitious than Pitt's, and it was not the mere accident that Pitt looked at the question after 1784 with the optimism of office, and Fox looked at it with the steadier eye of an Opposition leader, that made one of them abandon and the other retain his first enthusiasm. No doubt it was easier for Fox, whilst Pitt was turning rich nobodies into Peers at the most rapid rate in political history, to escape the genial illusion that all forms of undue influence had been banished from public life with Pitt's economical reforms. Indeed he said in 1797 that the corrupt influence of the Crown had made enormous strides in destroying the power of electors since 1784, and he instanced the fact that four-fifths of the elective franchises of Scotland had fallen into the hands of government. But the real cause of the difference between their views was a fundamental difference of temper. Pitt, who was to show himself to be a statesman of the class which "prefers to tolerate a great amount of injustice rather than create a small amount of disorder," regarded the question from the point of view of the effective working of the constitution;[1] Fox brought to the subject an enthusiasm, to which Pitt was a stranger, for the idea of popular government. Parliamentary Reform was not in his view merely a means of brightening

[1] Note Pitt's defence of himself, in 1793. "In the history of this country from the earliest period down to that in which I now speak, the number of electors have always been few in proportion to that of the great body of the people. My plan went to regulate the distribution of the right of electing members, to add some and to transfer others: when such was my plan, am I to be told that I have been an advocate for Parliamentary Reform, as if I had espoused the same side of the question which is now taken up by these honourable gentlemen, and were now resisting that cause which I had formerly supported?"

and improving the means of government; it was a means of giving a dignity to the nation, a tenacity to its will, a sense of self-respecting power, and of genuine community of interests to its population. In one of his first speeches on the question he said roundly that "that was the best government where the people had the greatest share in it."

Fox certainly desired Parliamentary Reform because he thought without it the House of Commons would never be strong enough to control the Executive, or independent enough to resist the various forms of Court pressure. He stated this definitely in his letter to Lord Holland, and in his speeches to the Associations during the platform campaign. But he had further a great sense of the moral value of self-government, and his objection to the anomalies of the representation was not merely the objection that administration would be more energetic, and clean, and facile if they were removed, but the objection that political power ought to be more widely distributed. This was very vividly expressed in the last great speech he made on Parliamentary Reform in 1797. The opponents of Grey's scheme in that year argued from the danger of innovation in a great crisis, an argument to which Stein gave the best concrete reply a few years later when he abolished serfdom in Prussia, and inspired Prussia with the energy which later withstood Napoleon. Fox, laying stress on the great accession of moral strength which would follow from extending political rights defended Parliamentary Reform as a great defensive measure. "When we look at the democracies of the ancient world, we are compelled to acknowledge their oppressions to their dependencies, their horrible acts of injustice and of ingratitude to their own citizens; but they compel us also to admiration by their vigour, their constancy, their spirit, and their exertions in every great emergency in which they are called upon to act. We are compelled to own that it gives a power, of which no other form of government is capable. Why? Because it incorporates every man with the state, because it arouses everything that belongs to the soul as

well as to the body of man: because it makes every individual feel that he is fighting for himself, and not for another, that it is his own cause, his own safety, his own concern, his own dignity on the face of the earth, and his own interest on the identical soil which he has to maintain, and accordingly we find that whatever may be objected to them on account of the turbulency of the passions which they engender, their short duration, and their disgusting vices, they have exacted from the common suffrage of mankind the palm of strength and vigour. Who that reads the history of the Persian war—what boy, whose heart is warmed by the grand and sublime actions which the democratic spirit produced, does not find in this principle the key to all the wonders which were achieved at Thermopylæ, and elsewhere, and of which the recent and marvellous acts of the French people are pregnant examples? He sees that the principle of liberty only could create the sublime irresistible emotion; and it is in vain to deny, from the striking illustration that our own times have given, that the principle is eternal, and that it belongs to the heart of man. Shall we, then, refuse to take the benefit of this invigorating principle? Shall we refuse to take the benefit which the wisdom of our ancestors resolved that it should confer on the British constitution? With the knowledge that it can be reinfused into our system without violence, without disturbing any one of its parts, are we become so inert, so terrified, or so stupid, as to hesitate for one hour to restore ourselves to the health which it would be sure to give? When we see the giant power that it confers upon others, we ought not to withhold it from Great Britain. How long is it since we were told in this House, that France was a blank in the map of Europe, and that she lay an easy prey to any power that might be disposed to divide or plunder her? Yet we see that by the mere force and spirit of this principle, France has brought all Europe at her feet. Without disguising the vices of France, without overlooking the horrors that have been committed, and that have tarnished

the glory of the Revolution, it cannot be denied that they have exemplified the doctrine, that if you wish for power you must look to liberty."[1] This fundamental difference of temper, the difference between regarding Parliamentary Reform as a means to effective government, and regarding it as a means to extending self-government, explains the rapid exhaustion of Pitt's enthusiasm when in office for the cause he had championed so vigorously. Pitt had to encounter a hostile Crown, and hostile colleagues; it may be that a stern resolution to make Parliamentary Reform a government measure would have overcome the objections of both, and if so Pitt never used all the resources at his disposal. Unfortunately the Opposition were in no better condition for pressing Parliamentary Reform. The great strength of the Rockinghams during North's Government had consisted first of all in their own definite pursuit of a particular concrete object of policy, and secondly in their supporters outside Parliament. The Opposition between 1784 and 1790 had neither of these advantages. Fox and North had united for a great public purpose, but that purpose could only be attained by taking and keeping office; it was not a purpose like the Rockingham policy of economical reform which could be promoted by a popular agitation. The proper corollary to the Rockingham campaign would have been a campaign for Parliamentary Reform, but who were the Opposition to undertake it? Fox believed in Parliamentary Reform and recognised its importance as a means of establishing Parliamentary control. But his allies North, and Burke, the philosopher of the Rockingham party, were both against him, and the history of the Opposition to Pitt's Ministry between 1784 and 1790 is the history of a rather amorphous and incoherent Opposition, pursuing no definite scheme of reform, and seriously discredited by a fatal excursion into the province of court intrigue.

That Opposition was united in one great public enterprise, the impeachment of Warren Hastings. On other questions

[1] *Speeches*, vol. vi. p. 353, May 26, 1797.

the only bond of union was a sense of indignation against Pitt, and the want of any stimulating cause acted with marked effect on the moral integrity and energy of Fox and his friends. Fox was probably less to blame than the public believed for the droll, sorry figure the Opposition cut in the Regency debates, for the first mistakes were made while he was still in Italy, and he at least extinguished very promptly on his return the daring and extravagant scheme Loughborough had prepared for the Prince of Wales. But the most that can be said for Fox is that some of his friends acted more unwisely, and with less regard to their public principles than he was prepared to act, and that Pitt's motives for proposing certain restrictions on the Regent's powers were not much more public spirited than Fox's motives in declaring that the heir-apparent had an inherent right to assume the regency. The spectacle of a party, led by such men as Fox and Burke, greedily counting on the accession of a man like George IV. and postponing all their great principles to a reckless championship of his claims, is a rueful picture of the indignities to which the weaknesses of even great men will submit, and it was not too soon forgotten by the public. The Prince of Wales must have had some engaging qualities to have attracted the men who were his friends, but the association of the Whigs with his petulant and unseemly quarrels and his profligate demands for public money, whether it was due to the fact that, as Mr. Meredith makes one of his characters say, "human nature in the upper circle is particularly likable," or to a disposition to use the recognised political device of borrowing, for the opposition to the Court, the secondary glamour of the heir-apparent, was neither creditable nor beneficent. The years that separated Pitt's triumph in 1784 from the outbreak of the French Revolution are a barren and disappointing landscape to Fox's admirers. There was no positive disfigurement except the Regency Debate, for the opposition to the Irish Commercial Propositions and the French Treaty, however mistaken, was quite consistent with

his principles, and he remained faithful to his public causes when those causes came into debate.[1] But they mark an interval in his career, when as a party leader he had no direct and definite project in view, and when the bitter memory surrounding the collapse of 1784, and all his bruised and battered hopes of reform, and the vindictive meanness with which Pitt had pursued him through the inglorious passages of the Westminster Scrutiny lent a certain acrid and factious character to his conduct.

If the Parliamentary Opposition was disabled by its composition from making Parliamentary Reform a great issue, there was a further reason for inaction in the serene contentment of opinion outside Parliament. The great public movement, into the fruits of which Pitt entered when he came into politics,[2] had ceased, and its last demonstration had been a demonstration in favour of the Crown, and in opposition to the Coalition India Bill.[3] There followed one of those tranquil interludes when the public mind, after a tumult of restless energy, settles down again to the slow and patient vibrations characteristic of the easygoing temperament that is only provoked by concrete hardships. "Since the rejection of that motion" (the motion of 1785), said Mr. Wyvill in a letter he addressed to Pitt in July 1789, "trade has increased; stocks have risen; the Finances have been reduced into good order, and Government has been steadily conducted on the principles of virtuous economy. In its eagerness to enjoy these blessings the nation forgets their precarious tenure; and as the benefits of your Administration are more extensively

[1] He championed the Dissenters though they had voted against him in 1784, see Preface to *A Defence of Dr. Price and the Reformers of England*, by the Rev. Christopher Wyvill, Chairman of the late Committee of the Association of the County of York. Published 1792.

[2] The agitation was of course well matured, and its effects noticeable before Pitt took part in it. See letter on Pitt's apostacy from Parliamentary Reform.

[3] Great meeting at York, 25th May 1784. Lord Fitzwilliam who was there and defended himself, charged Pitt with not being in earnest about Parliamentary Reform.

experienced, it seems more generally disinclined to any great Parliamentary change, though recommended even by your authority." The Opposition therefore could not have drawn upon the resources which had been the chief strength of the Rockinghams during North's Ministry, for there was no public opinion that could be stimulated into action. All the conditions inside and outside Parliament seemed to close the door on the one course that Fox could have taken to give expression to his fundamental views, an agitation to strengthen the House of Commons by means of Parliamentary Reform. He had to lead a party in the exhausted air of old quarrels, and no man can lead a party under those conditions with vigour, or imagination, or public usefulness.

At the time of the French Revolution both these conditions changed. From the Parliamentary Opposition there emerged a party. The ties of common resentments and policies that had run their course were become a bondage and their dissolution transformed the Opposition, once an unwieldy and miscellaneous collection of genuine enthusiasms, jealousies, and of loyalties personal rather than public, into a compact body of men united on unequivocal issues, stimulated by a splendid cause, and released from all the disorderly and bewildering associations which had been formed by the accidents of time, or politics, or family histories. The new issue dissolved attachments that were older than the Coalition; it alienated Burke as well as North, for it was the issue on which Fox and Burke had been divided in their first campaign, when Burke had restored the true meaning of aristocracy, and given the superannuated Whigs a great ideal of honest and merciful government, and Fox, like Richmond, had declared for popular representation, and championed doctrines that Burke and the patrician Whigs dreaded.[1] For each of them the breach of a friendship

[1] There is an interesting correspondence in the Wyvill Political Papers which shows the efforts made by the Yorkshire Association to meet the dislike of the Rockinghams to Electoral Reform.

formed and maintained in great crises of state, was one of those sorrows that are so bitter and so poignant as for ever to forbid reconciliation; for in those fierce separations the unstinted sincerities and the passion of the friendship that is dead place an everlasting ban on all colder comradeship. But what Fox lost as a friend, and his loss was incalculable, he gained as a leader. From 1784 to 1790 there was an Opposition respectable in numbers, listless in temper, and corresponding to no definite public policy on which men's minds in the country were fixed. From 1792 to 1797, when Fox seceded from Parliament, there was an Opposition insignificant in numbers, strenuous with the courage of proscribed and persecuted convictions, and representing in the public life of the country the entire fabric of English freedom. The whole spirit of the House of Commons was changed and elevated in that brisk climate of real and exhilarating contest.

Outside Parliament there was a similar revival of public interest. Pitt who had been regarded in 1784 as the champion of the doctrine of popular representation as against the aristocratical prejudice and caution of the Rockinghams, had been moving further and further away from that world of ideas and discontents through which he had passed into his proud political eminence. The alienation was silent, but it was complete. It is significant that Mr. Wyvill's letter to him as early as 1787, suggesting that he should publish the scheme of his next Bill in order to allow of discussion, was never answered, though the relations of the writer with Pitt had been cordial and almost intimate, and Pitt had acted in concert with the Yorkshire Association at each step in his career down to the Reform Bill of 1785. Pitt had clearly made up his mind that there was no longer any body of substantial opinion behind the demand and the organisation with which he had allied his early fortunes, and his gradual abandonment of Reform was, no doubt, prompted as much by a belief that he was dealing with a nation that was convalescent, and on the

high road to full recovery from its grave and anxious disorder, as by his natural disinclination to turn his hand again to an arduous enterprise that was uncongenial to the King and to a large proportion of his own supporters. But the ideas that had been abroad during the earlier agitation, ideas unattractive to Rockingham and positively distasteful and alarming to Burke, were still alive, and the French Revolution gave them an impetus and a sudden notoriety. The Society for Constitutional Information to which Pitt himself had belonged, had remained in existence, if a languid existence, supported by Wyvill, Cartwright, and Horne Tooke, and the excitement and speculative spirit that arose with the Revolution in France gave the Society a new alacrity and vigour. The agitation created by the Society was reinforced in 1791 when two societies were founded to represent respectively the aristocratic and the democratic enthusiasm for Reform, the "Friends of the People" with a subscription of five guineas a year, and the "London Corresponding Society" with a subscription of a penny a week. The latter society was the working-class wing of the Democratic movement, and as its founder Thomas Hardy observed,[1] many of the reformers of 1782 were so dreadfully alarmed at the uncommon appearance of the reformers in 1792 that "they fled for shelter under the all-protecting wings of the Crown." But the traditions of the campaign of 1780–1782 had not been forgotten by reformers whose general attack on the vices of the existing system was bolder, more incisive, and more unqualified. There had been Corresponding Societies fifteen years before, and one of them had numbered Burke amongst its members; the project of a great convention, more than once suggested in London, and actually carried out in Edinburgh during the next few years, had of course been one of the most effective demonstrations of the Economy campaign. All of these societies helped to stimulate a public curiosity about questions of reform, but the most important organ-

[1] See Graham Wallas' *Life of Place.*

isation, from the point of view of the Parliamentary Opposition, was the Society of the Friends of the People, a Society that separated itself ostentatiously from the more furious formulas of the democratic organisations, and turned a deaf ear to the new and eager vocabulary of freedom. This Society represented the left wing of the Whigs. Sincerely attached to Reform, it was in effect resuming the struggle with the Court at the point where it had been broken off in 1782; its remedies were all embraced in the ideas of continuity, development, restoration.

The result of these changes of temper outside and inside the House of Commons was seen in two motions for Reform in 1793 and 1797, both made by Grey, who was henceforth Fox's chief confederate. The procedure adopted in the Parliamentary attack in 1780, when the presenting of petitions was the preliminary to motions, was followed strictly, and Grey's motion in May 1793 was preceded by the introduction of various petitions from all parts of the country. One petition from Sheffield the House refused to receive on the ground that its language was unbecoming; but Fox made an effective point in the debate by reminding the House that the present Lord Chancellor had defended a remonstrance from the City of London during the Wilkes Case in which it was declared that the House of Commons had forfeited its authority and that its subjects were not bound to obey its acts, on the ground that if the subject had the right to petition for a particular object, he had a right to urge any argument that was relevant. The petition presented by Grey, on making his motion, is important because it contained a statement of the condition of Parliamentary representation, that had been prepared after careful investigation, and it gives us a curious picture of that constitution of which Burke thought all the moss and mortar immutable and divine. It showed that the control of Parliament was virtually in the hands of seventy-one peers and ninety-one commoners, who between them

returned three hundred and six members to the House of Commons.[1]

Grey's motion for Reform was rejected by 282 to 41 votes. In 1797 he adopted a different method. Instead of asking for a Committee to consider the various petitions submitted, he introduced a Bill of his own, and this Bill was a much bolder and larger plan than any scheme as yet submitted to the House of Commons. Grey proposed to increase the county members from ninety-two to one hundred and thirteen, by giving two members to each of the three ridings of the county of York, and by similar

[1] "That at the present day the House of Commons does not fully and fairly represent the people of England. . . . That the number of representatives assigned to the different counties is grossly disproportioned to their comparative extent, population, and trade. That the majority of your Honourable House is elected by less than 15,000 electors, which, even if the male adults in the kingdom be estimated at so low a number as 3,000,000, is not more than the two-hundredth part of the people to be represented. Is it fitting that Rutland and Yorkshire should bear an equal rank in the scale of county representation? Seventy members are returned for 35 places, 'in which it would be to trifle with the patience of your Honourable House to mention any number of votes whatever'—the elections at the places alluded to being notoriously a matter of form.

"90 members are returned by 46 places, in none of which the number of voters exceeds 50.

"37 members are returned by 19 places, in none of which the number of voters exceeds 100.

"52 members are returned by 26 places, in none of which the number of voters exceeds 200.

"All which the petitioners expressed themselves ready to prove.

"Religious opinions create an incapacity to vote. All Papists are excluded generally, and, by the operation of the test laws, Protestant dissenters are deprived of a voice in the election of representatives in about 30 boroughs.

"A man possessed of £1000 a year, arising from copyhold or leasehold for 99 years, trade, or public funds, is not thereby entitled to a vote. A man paying taxes to any amount, how great soever, for his domestic establishment does not thereby obtain a right to vote, unless resident in certain boroughs.

"Eighty-four individuals, by their own immediate authority, send 157 members to Parliament. In addition to these, 150 more members are returned, not by the collected voice of those whom they appear to represent, but by the recommendation of 70 powerful individuals, and thus 154 patrons returned 307 members, or a decided majority of the whole House."—Jephson, *The Platform*, vol. i. pp. 204, 205.

additions to other large counties, and to admit copyholders and leaseholders for terms of years, as well as freeholders to the county franchise. In the boroughs he proposed uniform Household Suffrage. By the scheme, according to Fox, there would have been some 600,000 voters, whereas the petition presented four years earlier had shown that the majority of the House was elected by less than 15,000 electors. Grey was defeated, after a debate in which all the honours fell to the Opposition, by 256 to 91 votes.

The two speeches he made on this occasion give us the fullest insight into Fox's views on Parliamentary Reform, and all the questions that the Revolutionary agitation had brought to the troubled surface of political speculation. They show that his championship of reform was perfectly consecutive and consistent. He regarded Parliamentary Reform in the light of a remedy provided by the British constitution, and he had as little sympathy as Burke himself with the doctrine that a fresh beginning should be made in constitution building.

"Without attempting to follow his right honourable friend, when he proposed to soar into the skies, or dive into the deep, to encounter his metaphysical adversaries, because in such heights and depths the operations of the actors were too remote from view to be observed with much benefit, he would rest on practice, to which he was more attached, as being better understood. And if, by a peculiar interposition of Divine power, all the wisest men of every age and of every country could be collected into one assembly, he did not believe that their united wisdom would be capable of forming even a tolerable constitution. In this opinion he thought he was supported by the unvarying evidence of history and observation. Another opinion he held, no matter whether erroneous or not, for he stated it only as an illustration, namely, that the most skilful architect could not build, in the first instance, so commodious a habitation as one that had been originally intended for some other use, and had been gradually

improved by successive alterations suggested by various inhabitants for its present purpose. If then, so simple a structure as a commodious habitation was so difficult in theory, how much more difficult the structure of a government?"[1]

The difference between Fox and such Radicals as Paine was that Fox started from the Whig Revolution and Locke's interpretation of it, whereas they started from an abstract individual right, which they regarded as positively outraged, and not merely imperfectly recognised, in the British constitution. Fox was perhaps more typical than anyone else of the quality which distinguished speculation on freedom in England from speculation on freedom in France; in the one case speculation centred round institutions, in the other round ideas. In the one case the right to demand reform was based on the fact that existing institutions were the instruments of freedom; in the other that existing institutions were the contradiction of freedom. It was the chief pride of a Frenchman in the Revolution that he had discovered a new moral element; it was the chief pride of an Englishman like Fox that the constitution of his country expressly recognised the doctrine of the Sovereignty of the People and the Rights of Man. Fox disliked all the eager talk of the extreme remedies of visionary democrats, because he believed it was misleading to the populace, and a useful pretext to the Government who wished to create a confusion and a prejudice in men's minds against all reform. He believed that what was wanted to give the people of the country real control of Government could be attained under the ægis of the constitution, and he certainly believed also that if this were not done, a period of anarchy and revolution was imminent.

Fox agreed with Burke in his admiration of the general plan of the constitution; he differed fundamentally in his interpretation of it, and also in his appreciation of its virtues

[1] Speech on Mr. Grey's Motion for a Reform in Parliament, May 7, 1793. *Speeches*, vol. v. p. 109.

of development. That difference was fundamental because it was the difference between the doctrine of a benevolent and independent aristocracy and the doctrine of popular government. It had been Burke's theory that the interposition of the people was necessary in crises, but interposition only in the sense that a very limited public opinion should be collected and organised outside Parliament. Fox had argued from the first, and the events of forty years are his overwhelming justification, that popular representation was indispensable first of all to any sense of security against encroachment, and secondly to the adequate control of the Executive by the House of Commons. In 1793 the case for Reform was stronger and not weaker than the case in 1782, and there was nothing in the political conditions to make a Reform agitation more dangerous than it had been when Pitt undertook it. In 1780 England was at war, she had suffered great losses, she had ranged against her three European powers besides the revolted colonists, her finances were in confusion, order and authority in high places had collapsed, and the language of remonstrance in the country was often the language of menace and rebellion. A statesman who had argued for Parliamentary Reform in those crises had little ground for urging the state of the nation in 1790 or in 1792, when, if England was on the verge of war, she was not single-handed, and when there was no symptom of the weakness of authority, like the Gordon Riots, as a reason against Parliamentary Reform. Even if Fox had confined his case for Reform to the arguments Pitt used in 1782, the case in 1790 was overwhelming. If anything were wanted to make that case complete, it was provided in the repressive legislation, shortly instituted by Pitt to stifle all discussion in a country which he had represented as contented and uncomplaining.

But Fox's championship of Reform was not based only on Pitt's arguments of 1782. It was prompted, as has been shown from a quotation earlier in the chapter, by a keen sense of the power and authority which a nation draws

from an extended suffrage, a sense which brought Fox into direct collision with the theory Burke had applied, even in his least timid and tentative moments, to the political troubles of the state. It was Burke's theory that the actual decision in political affairs should rest with a small minority of men, whose acts and standards should be known and discussed publicly, but whose independence of judgment should be expressly and clearly acknowledged. Fox boldly adopted the democratic theory of the rule of the majority. He repudiated the doctrine that every man had a right to a vote, but he repudiated on the other side the doctrine that the rights of the people were respected in an arrangement which restricted political power to an insignificant fraction. He held that the people were entitled not only to immunity from actual oppression by the Government, but also to security against future oppression. The House of Commons existed in his view for a definite purpose, the purpose of protecting the interests of the whole kingdom against the usurpations and injustices of the Executive. Did it fulfil that purpose under a set of arrangements which left its election to fifteen thousand electors? According to Burke it did, because the best security against those evils was the rule of a benevolent oligarchy, which was restrained by a party system and formed a barrier against the ambition and corruption of the Crown on the one hand, and against the follies and the mischievous humours of the people on the other. According to Pitt it did, on the ground that the country showed no signs of dissatisfaction with his own rule, and the rumble of discontent came from quarters where the constitution itself and not the anomalies of representation was challenged and disliked. Fox argued that it did not, because the whole experience of its working showed that the only substantial and permanent defence against the Executive was to be found in calling into play the energy and the power of the mass of the people.

This argument might appear to point to universal suffrage. Why if Fox talked of the paramount rights of

the majority, did he disagree with the extreme theory that every man had a right to a vote? The answer is that he started from the Whig theory of the social compact, and the revolutionaries started from the individual who had made no covenant and recognised no claims. Hence it came that the Whig Revolution was in Fox's eyes the confirmation of natural rights, whilst in Paine's eyes it was a violation of natural rights. Fox argued that every Englishman had a right to certain liberties described and guaranteed in the constitution; he had also a right to be governed in the spirit of the contract betwen the people and its Government, and to security against infractions of his personal liberty and the waste or misuse of his contributions. This security he could only have if the decision in political issues rested with the majority. The value of that majority was therefore on this showing its deliberative value, the assumption being that the majority were more likely than a minority to make its decisions with a strict regard to the interests of the whole. But the value being deliberative, it followed that the majority must consist of persons who give their own free and unbribed opinion, and therefore Fox excluded voters who would thwart rather than reinforce the independent judgment of the community. He had in other words a keen appreciation of the meaning of citizenship, and he wished to make the basis of the state a great community of self-respecting and independent citizens, a consummation which he judged unattainable if the House of Commons represented a number of noblemen, rich commoners and corporations, and the patronage of the Crown, or if again it represented a population of which large sections were liable to corruption or other forms of pressure.[1]

[1] This theory runs through the two great speeches he made in 1793 and 1797, from which it is worth while to quote a few important passages.

"A right honourable friend of his (Mr. Windham) had last night, in a very eloquent, but very whimsical speech, endeavoured to prove that the majority was generally wrong. But when he came to answer some objections of his own suggesting, he found himself reduced to say, that, when he differed from the majority, he would consider himself as equally independent of the decision of

It is interesting to notice that Fox regarded this agitation as the corollary to the Economy agitation. He quoted Savile, Camden, Chatham, and Burke's predictions in 1781

that majority as one independent county member of the decision of another—which was just to say, that he would put an end to society; for where every individual was independent of the will of the rest, no society could exist. It was singular for him to defend the decision of the majority, who had found it so often against him; and he was in hopes that his right honourable friend would have shown him some easy way of solving the difficulty. His right honourable friend said that a wise man would look first to the reason of the thing to be decided, then to force, or his power of carrying that decision into effect, but never to the majority. He would say, look first and look last at the reason of the thing, without considering whether the majority was likely to be for or against you, and least of all to force. Mr. Fox admitted that the majority might sometimes oppress the minority, and that the minority might be justified in resisting such oppression, even by force; but as a general rule, though not without exception, the majority in every community must decide for the whole, because in human affairs there was no umpire but human reason. The presumption was also that the majority would be right; for if five men were to decide by a majority, it was probable that the three would be right and the two wrong, of which, if they were to decide by force, there would be no probability at all. What was the criterion of truth but the general sense of mankind? Even in mathematics, we proceeded from certain axioms, of the truth of which we had no other proof but that all mankind agreed in believing them. If, then, what all men agreed on was admitted to be true, there was a strong presumption, that what many, or the majority, agreed on, was true likewise. Even reverence for antiquity resolved itself into this; for what was it but consulting the decision of the majority, not of one or two generations, but of many, by the concurrence of which we justly thought that we arrived at greater certainty? His objection to universal suffrage was not distrust of the decision of the majority, but because there was no practical mode of collecting such suffrage, and that by attempting it, what from the operation of hope on some, fear on others, and all the sinister means of influence that would so certainly be exerted, fewer individual opinions would be collected than by an appeal to a limited number. Therefore holding fast to the right of a majority to decide, and to the natural rights of man, as taught by the French, but much abused by their practice, he would resist universal suffrage."—Speech on Mr. Grey's Motion for a Reform in Parliament, May 7, 1793. Vol. v. p. 108.

"Having thus shown that the House of Commons, as now constituted, was neither adequate to the due discharge of its duties at present, nor afforded any security that it would be so in future, what remained for him to answer but general topics of declamation? He had sufficient confidence in the maxims he had early learned, and sufficient reverence for the authors from whom he learned them, to brave the ridicule now attempted to be thrown upon all who avowed opinions that, till very lately, had been received as the fundamental principles of liberty. He was ready to say with Locke, that government originated not only

that no House of Commons would in future be powerful enough to control the Executive. From this point of view the part he took in the agitation for Parliamentary

for, but from the people, and that the people were the legitimate sovereign in every community. If such writings as were now branded as subversive of all government had not been read and studied, would the Parliament of 1640 have done those great and glorious things, but for which we might be now receiving the mandates of a despot, like Germans, or any other slaves. A noble Lord (Mornington) had discovered that Rousseau, in his *Social Contract*, had said a very extravagant thing. He was not very well qualified to judge, for he had found the beginning of the *Social Contract* so extravagant, that he could not read it through, but he believed it was one of the most extravagant of that author's works. He did not mean to say that the noble Lord had produced an extravagant saying from Rousseau as a novelty; but it was somewhat remarkable, that an extravagant thing, from the most extravagant work of an extravagant foreign author, should be produced as an argument against a reform in the representation of the people of Great Britain. Reverence for antiquity was then appealed to, and gentlemen were asked, if they would consent to alter that which in former times had been productive of such important acquisitions to liberty. With equal propriety our ancestors might have been asked, if they would alter that constitution under which so great an acquisition to liberty as Magna Charta had been obtained; and yet, after the acquisition of Magna Charta, the condition of this country had been such as was rather to be execrated and detested, than cherished and admired."—Speech on Mr. Grey's Motion for a Reform in Parliament, May 7, 1793. Vol. v. p. 115.

"I have always deprecated universal suffrage, not so much on account of the confusion to which it would lead, as because I think that we should in reality lose the very object which we desire to obtain; because I think it would in its nature embarrass, and prevent the deliberative voice of the country from being heard. I do not think that you augment the deliberative body of the people by counting all the heads, but that in truth you confer on individuals, by this means, the power of drawing forth numbers, who, without deliberation, would implicitly act upon their will. My opinion is, that the best plan of representation is that which shall bring into activity the greatest number of independent voters, and that that is defective which would bring forth those whose situation and condition take from them the power of deliberation. I can have no conception of that being a good plan of election which should enable individuals to bring regiments to the poll. I hope gentlemen will not smile if I endeavour to illustrate my position by referring to the example of the other sex. In all the theories and projects of the most absurd speculation, it has never been suggested that it would be advisable to extend the elective suffrage to the female sex; and yet, justly respecting, as we must do, the mental powers, the acquirements, the discrimination, and the talents of the women of England, in the present improved state of society—knowing the opportunities which they have for acquiring knowledge—that they have interests as dear and as important as our own, it must be the genuine feeling of every gentleman who hears me, that all the

Reform was the logical sequel of twenty years of public life as a Liberal; it was all part of his attack on the Crown. He had fought the Crown by the Economy campaign, the only

superior classes of the female sex of England must be more capable of exercising the elective suffrage with deliberation and propriety, than the uninformed individuals of the lowest class of men to whom the advocates of universal suffrage would extend it. And yet, why has it never been imagined that the right of election should be extended to women? Why! but because by the law of nations, and perhaps also by the law of nature, that sex is dependent on ours; and because, therefore, their voices would be governed by the relation in which they stand in society. Therefore it is, Sir, that with the exceptions of companies, in which the right of voting merely affects property, it has never been in the contemplation of the most absurd theorists to extend the elective franchise to the other sex. The desideratum to be obtained, is independent voters, and that, I say, would be a defective system that should bring regiments of soldiers, of servants, and of persons whose ow condition necessarily curbed the independence of their minds. That, then, I take to be the most perfect system, which shall include the greatest number of independent electors, and exclude the greatest number of those who are necessarily by their condition dependent. I think that the plan of my honourable friend draws this line as discreetly as it can be drawn, and it by no means approaches to universal suffrage. It would neither admit, except in particular instances, soldiers nor servants. Universal suffrage would extend the right to three millions of men, but there are not more than seven hundred thousand houses that would come within the plan of my honourable friend; and when it is considered, that out of these some are the property of minors, and that some persons have two or more houses, it would fix the number of voters for Great Britain at about six hundred thousand; and I call upon gentlemen to say, whether this would not be sufficiently extensive for deliberation on the one hand, and yet sufficiently limited for order on the other. This has no similarity with universal suffrage; and yet, taking the number of representatives as they now stand, it would give to every member about fifteen hundred constituents."—Speech on Mr. Grey's Motion for a Reform in Parliament, May 26, 1797. Vol. vi. pp. 363, 364.

"Sir, I have done. I have given my advice. I propose the remedy, and fatal will it be for England if pride and prejudice much longer continue to oppose it. The remedy which is proposed is simple, easy, and practicable; it does not touch the vitals of the constitution; and I sincerely believe it will restore us to peace and harmony. Do you not think that you must come to parliamentary reform soon; and is it not better to come to it now when you have the power of deliberation, than when, perhaps, it may be extorted from you by convulsion? There is as yet time to frame it with freedom and discussion; it will even yet go to the people with the grace and favour of a spontaneous act. What will it be when it is extorted from you with indignation and violence? God forbid that this should be the case! but now is the moment to prevent it; and now, I say, wisdom and policy recommend it to you, when you may enter into all the considerations to which it leads, rather than to postpone it to a time when you

one of his strategies in which he led an army that was successful. He had fought it by the Coalition, a scheme abortive, misconducted, and ineffectual. He fought it last by attempting to arm the nation with the power and dignity of democracy. The Crown conquered, but it is idle to refuse to the vanquished the credit of a single purpose pursued valiantly through misunderstanding, unpopularity, and the bleak monotony of failure.

To Fox the great issue raised by Parliamentary Reform was the issue of the protection of the governed from the incompetence or the ambitions of the Government. The gross defects in Parliamentary representation meant the aggrandisement of the influence of the Crown, and the paralysis of the energies and integrity of administration. In both respects every one of the years during which Pitt discouraged or opposed Reform aggravated instead of modifying the abuses he was anxious to destroy when first he won public support as a reformer. Pitt himself was deceived like the people, into mistaking the harmonious operation of

will have nothing to consider but the number and the force of those who demand it. It is asked, whether liberty has not gained much of late years, and whether the popular branch ought not, therefore, to be content? To this I answer, that if liberty has gained much, power has gained more. Power has been indefatigable and unwearied in its encroachments. Everything has run in that direction through the whole course of the present reign. This was the opinion of Sir George Savile, of the Marquis of Rockingham, and of all the virtuous men who, in their public life, proved themselves to be advocates for the rights of the people. They saw and deplored the tendency of the court; they saw that there was a determined spirit in the secret advisers of the crown to advance its power, and to encourage no administration that should not bend itself to that pursuit. Accordingly, through the whole reign, no administration which cherished notions of a different kind has been permitted to last, and nothing, therefore, or next to nothing, has been gained to the side of the people, but everything to the crown in the course of the reign. During the whole of this period we have had no more than three administrations, one for twelve months, one for nine, and one for three months, that acted upon the popular principle of the early part of this century: nothing, therefore, I say, has been gained to the people, while the constant current has run towards the crown; and God knows what is to be the consequence, both to the crown and country! I believe that we are come to the last moment of possible remedy."—Speech on Mr. Grey's Motion for Reform in Parliament, May 26, 1797. Vol. vi. pp. 368, 369.

government, for the final solution of the problems of government. The great increase of manufactures was rapidly redistributing the population and bringing new elements and problems into politics, and it is impossible ever to know what England lost by the incapacity of administration during the last years of the eighteenth century. It was during these years that a silent revolution was accomplished which gradually extinguished in England the most stable and the most robust of all the elements of a nation. By the neglect or the mistaken treatment of the great problems of the Poor Law, agriculture, punishment, and education, the aristocracy, which Burke had thought the ideal system for governing England, stamped its rule as inadequate and mischievous. Its epitaph is written in the ruin of the yeoman class in England. To Pitt, whose whole life was spent in the House of Commons, and for whom the control of majorities came to be almost a sovereign end of existence, the England he governed was a small electorate that returned him with constant majorities, and a Parliament which he controlled by his eloquence and by a discretion wise enough to yield most projects to stubborn prejudice. There was an aspect of England that was unknown to the master of the House of Commons. The oligarchy was becoming closer; the country was losing the priceless benefit of an independent peasantry; the towns were still under the rule of corrupt corporations;[1] the disproportion between population and citizens was becoming more glaring, and scarcely anywhere did there survive a civic spirit. To complete the catastrophes that were silently accumulating the materials for revolution or decay, Pitt himself extinguished the one great characteristic and saving quality of English politics, the spirit of free discussion.

The Parliamentary oligarchy had outlived its day of use-

[1] Leslie Stephen, *Utilitarians*, vol. i. p. 99. "Municipal institutions were almost at their last point of decay. Manchester and Birmingham were two of the largest and most rapidly growing towns. By the end of the century Manchester had a population of 90,000, and Birmingham of 70,000. Both were ruled, so far as they were ruled, by the remnants of old manorial institutions."

fulness. It had neither the vigour, nor the knowledge, nor the sympathy to carry on the great work of government. Pitt argued that it was virtually representative of the public opinion of the nation, but there is evidence that in one great question in which Pitt himself was interested for many years, Parliament was some distance behind public opinion. In 1788 there were presented to Parliament 103 petitions, or twice as many petitions as had ever before been presented on any question, in favour of the abolition of the Slave Trade; they included petitions from most of the leading corporations of England and Scotland. The agitation grew, and in 1792 the petitions had increased to 519; there were Associations in many provincial towns, and large numbers of English persons preferred to deny themselves sugar rather than use slave labour. Yet when in 1791 Wilberforce moved for leave to bring in a Bill to prevent the further importation of slaves into the British West Indies, though he was supported by Pitt, Fox, and Burke, he was defeated by 163 to 88,[1] and it was not till Fox came into office in 1806 that the trade was destroyed.

The truth is that an oligarchy like that which existed at the end of the century was the best of all institutions for the use and aggrandisement of particular interests, and those interests could safely defy an opinion which was mocked with the name of representation, though it had no means of making itself heard or felt in the House of Commons. Those

[1] It is interesting to notice that in speaking on the subject in April 1792, Fox referred to the public agitation, and said it was bound to go on. "He did not mean to say that gentlemen ought to be induced by a fear of this sort to vote against a measure which they thought wrong in their consciences; but they must not imagine the agitation of the subject would be over. It was impossible to suppose it. No man however romantic in the cause of slavery, however enthusiastic for injustice, could be so wild as to fancy that either the country or the friends of abolition in the House, would let this trade go on undisturbed for eight years longer." Cp. Romilly's letter on the rejection of Wilberforce's motion, 1791. "We have but one consolation under this disgrace; it is a consolation however which is itself the source of another species of disgrace. It is that the House of Commons is not a national assembly, and certainly does not speak the sense of the nation."—*Romilly Memoirs*, i. 425.

interests made a stout fight against all reform, and the greatest interest of all, the landlord interest, was paramount in Parliament, where its mistakes or its selfishness were responsible for some of the most mischievous Acts that were ever adopted. Fox did not see much further than his contemporaries in many of these matters, though he showed that he was able to detach himself from the general prejudices of the landlord class by his attack on the Game Laws as "a mass of insufferable tyranny," and by his proposal to give the occupier his just rights over the game on the ground he occupied. But the best proof that Fox's remedy for the disorder of the state was the right remedy was provided in 1832 when Reform regenerated Parliament, and produced in a few years the great amendment of the Poor Law and the Municipal Reform Bill. If that energy had been added to Parliament forty years earlier England might have been spared some of the worst passages in her history, and some of the gravest of her social diseases.

CHAPTER V

THE REIGN OF TERROR

Comparison of the Agitation of 1793–94 with that of 1780. A different social class, but methods the same. The Government case destroyed by the great trials of 1794. Lord Rosebery's justification. The Prosecutions in England and Scotland. The Coercion Bills of 1795. The Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. The hard lot of the Reformers. Coleridge's letter on Thelwall. The efforts of the Opposition in Parliament. Attempts to promote agitation in the country. Fox retires in 1797. His speech at the Whig Club on the Sovereignty of the People. His name removed from the Privy Council. Characteristics of his speeches against the Coercion.

IT is at first sight a curious irony that the man who struck the severest blow in the eighteenth century not merely at the spirit of reform, but at all the elementary rights of public discussion, was the statesman who became Prime Minister after taking part in an agitation in which abuse of the Court was unsparing, and the assertion of popular rights was uncompromising and resonant. It is argued that no comparison is possible between the agitation of the nineties, and the agitation which had shaken a new energy into public life during the closing years of the American War. The discussions which Pitt set himself to extinguish by all the means a British Government can employ are regarded as essentially distinct from the earlier discussions from which Pitt himself had drawn his chief support as a politician. It is true that the new movement was a movement along a different stratum of English society, but it is emphatically untrue to say that the earlier campaign affords

no parallel to the language of complaint and the methods of the agitation, which Pitt contrived to stifle in a long series of persecutions and enactments during the last ten years of the century. The case is carefully considered in a pamphlet published in 1796 (*The History of the Two Acts*) in which the writer recalls the violence of various statements and protests that belong to the earlier campaign; in particular the threat thrown out by Chatham, "It is now necessary to instruct the Throne in the language of truth." "I might," says the writer, "multiply quotations of this kind; it was the common language of Parliament, from whence it descended to books, newspapers, pamphlets, and common conversation; it was the popular creed adopted by the Americans at war, and by the English who were discontented. It is mentioned here neither with approbation nor censure: it may be wrong to appeal too often to the 'extreme medicine of the constitution,' it may be wrong to carry jealousy to an excess, for it is apt to become a blind and hateful passion. But enough appears upon record to show that such doctrines are not new nor the growth of France: are not to be traced to the fields of Islington, nor to the shops of the majestic booksellers of the people" (xxviii).

The truth is, as anyone who reads the accounts of the earlier campaigns can soon discover, that there was as much brimstone and gunpowder in the language of those campaigns, as in the language which Pitt afterwards tried to represent as the spirit of social arson and disorder.[1] When Chatham said, "Rather than the nation should surrender its birthright, I hope I shall see the question brought to issue fairly between people and Government," he could scarcely be regarded as confining himself to the conventional asperities of party warfare. It was held to be rank treason in 1793 to question the integrity of Parliament, or its title to speak for the nation through representatives

[1] This comparison between the Economy agitation of 1780 and the Reform agitation of 1793 was suggested to me by Mr. D. L. Savory who has a monograph in MS. on the subject of the Societies.

chosen by a few peers and influential commoners, who drew no distinction between their nomination to a borough, and any other form of property they might have to dispose of.[1] Yet it was the constant refrain of the reformers in 1780 that Parliament was venal, incompetent, and without credentials to represent the people of Great Britain. It was the chief criticism of the societies during the Revolution that they were attempting to collect, in the form of a Convention, a new means of government in the nation, which would rival the authority of Parliament. The argument was not less pertinent to the Great Convention of 1780, when the several county committees were invited to send delegates to London to confer together on the most effective way of supporting the petitions for economical reform,[2] and it must be remembered that North's supporters urged this very argument against that Convention. Wyvill's letter on the subject is an interesting record of its object. "Each county, city, and town, having first associated separately and apart, the whole body of petitioners in due time may be collected, and firmly consolidated in one great 'National Association'; the obvious consequence of which must be certain and complete success to the constitutional reform proposed by the people." The very idea of association and co-operation was regarded as criminal in the societies that were persecuted by Pitt, but Pitt himself under cross-examination was driven after some ineffectual prevarications to admit that he had attended a meeting in 1782 at which delegates were present from various societies for promoting Parliamentary Reform. Pitt was eloquent about the enormity

[1] The chairman of the Wigton Public meeting mentioned in sending a petition against the Two Bills of 1795 that the electors had never seen their member and did not know his address.

[2] Sheridan made a very happy use of this argument in 1793, comparing the proposed convention of 1794 with the convention held in 1780. "We make a boast of equal laws. If these men are to be considered as guilty of high treason, let us have some retrospective, and whatever in that case may happen to me, his Majesty will at least derive some benefit since he will thereby get rid of a majority of his present Cabinet."

of appealing to the people against Parliament in 1793, but there are any number of instances in which this idea of appealing to the people as the *ultima ratio* of flouted discontent found a grim and defiant expression in the earlier agitations.

Three examples may well be quoted. One is the language of Lord Carysfoot in a letter to the Gentlemen of the Huntingdonshire Committee: "The people must work their own salvation. Every measure of public benefit must spring from them. No Minister however profligate, no Parliament however corrupt can stand in opposition to their collective force. An authentic declaration of the sense of the nation must have decisive weight. In this light I consider the petitions which have been sent up by so many counties and principal towns; and when backed by a national association, maintained by committees of correspondence, I cannot conceive that they can be resisted."—Feb. 1780.

Another is the language of the Duke of Richmond in 1783: "I have no hesitation in saying that from every consideration which I have been able to give to this great question, that for many years has occupied my mind, and from every day's experience to the present hour I am more and more convinced, that the restoring the right of voting universally to every man not incapacitated by nature for want of reason, or by law for the commission of crimes, together with annual elections, is the only reform that can be effectual and permanent. I am further convinced, that it is the only reform that is practicable. The lesser reform (alluding to Mr. Pitt's motion in the House of Commons) has been attempted with every possible advantage in its favour; not only from the zealous support of the advocates for a more equal one, but from the assistance of men of great weight both in and out of power. But with all those temperaments and helps it has failed; not one *proselyte* has been gained from corruption, nor has the least ray of hope been held out from any quarter, that the House of Commons was inclined to adopt any other mode of reform. The weight of cor-

ruption has crushed this more gentle, as it would have defeated any more efficacious plan in the same circumstances. From that quarter, therefore, I have nothing to hope. It is from the people at large that I expect any good, and I am convinced that the only way to make them feel that they are really concerned in the business, is to contend for their full, clear, and indisputable rights of universal representation. But in the more liberal and great plan of universal representation a clear and distinct principle at once appears, that cannot lead us wrong. Not CONVENIENCY but RIGHT. If it is not a maxim of our Constitution, that a British subject is to be governed only by laws to which he has consented by himself or his representative, we should instantly abandon the error; but if it is the essential of Freedom, founded on the eternal principles of justice and wisdom, and our unalienable birthright, we should not hesitate in asserting it. Let us then but determine to act upon this broad principle of giving to every man his own, and we shall immediately get rid of all the perplexities to which the narrow notions of partiality and exclusion must ever be subject."[1]

The third is the speech of a less celebrated gentleman made at a general meeting of the freeholders of the County of Cambridge in March 25, 1780, published and preserved in a collection of pamphlets. "Many instances may be brought from History of Kings who have been solemnly deposed for not performing the duties of their office, and for infringing the liberties of the people. But the last great revolution of our government is a decisive precedent that subjects may alter their rulers, and that kings must expect allegiance no longer than they deserve it. Besides, when after all the waste of blood and treasure which the present calamitous war has occasioned, we are called upon to risk the last stake we possess for the service of our country, it surely becomes us to inquire whether we have a country. For I do not call

[1] From a letter from the Duke of Richmond to Lieut.-Colonel Sharman, Chairman of the Committee of Correspondence at Belfast, dated Aug. 15, 1783.

the air we breathe, nor the soil we trample upon a country, nor the scanty fare which supports you for daily toils, but I call that a country in which men possess an equal share in their own government and privileges which are inviolable: he therefore that lays before you the noble rights which are inherent in you, as Englishmen stimulates you most effectively to their defence. . . . The House of Commons has but a subordinate existence: it is the organ of the people's voice; the creature of their will, and when we elect it we have a right to choose in what degree and under what modifications we will delegate our own unalienable rights."[1]

Pitt, it is true, represented the agitation for Parliamentary Reform as part of some gigantic conspiracy against the state, in which projects of riot and rebellion were disguised under the comparatively blameless banner, which ten years earlier had floated over the enthusiasms of his youth. That account might have been accepted if it had not been disproved by the result of the Government's own action. The House of Commons in the kind of terror that inevitably overtook an assembly of rich men, legislating as the nominees of a few peers, and holding their seats as so much personal property, when the dreaded passion for reform had invaded the artisan and the shopkeeper, brought credulous and terrified minds to the investigation of the Secret Committee's report on the popular societies, and the phantom of a stealthy insurrection was as good a party whip as any paymaster in the King's service. The Committee that investigated the papers consisted exclusively of supporters of the Government, and it contained, not only Pitt, Dundas, and the grim hero of the Scottish persecutions, the Lord Advocate, but the two chief

[1] Note that at centenary festival of Revolutionary Society in 1788, the basis of society was declared to be—

"1. That all civil and political authority is derived from the people.

"2. That the abuse of power justifies resistance.

"3. That the rights of private judgment, liberty of conscience, trial by jury, freedom of the press, and freedom of election ought ever to be held sacred and inviolable."

victims of the panic, Windham and Burke himself. Its report was brought up by Pitt, and the House of Commons agreed by 146 votes to 28 to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act. Unhappily for Pitt's credit, all the evidence which in a few hours convinced a small committee of his followers in the House of Commons that the state was in danger was afterwards submitted to a jury in a famous series of trials. The result was to show that the conspirators desired just what they had always professed to desire, a reform of the House of Commons, and an English jury unlike a Scotch jury had not learnt yet to oblige the Government by calling that demand High Treason.[1]

The struggle during these years between the governing classes and the revolutionary societies was the old struggle between the men who lived on the constitution and those who lived under it; the movement for reform was the insurgent spirit of discontent with a set of political arrangements that were quite inadequate for the needs of the community. But there is one great difference in the accidents of its conduct. If North had been able in 1780 to throw into prison anyone who spoke the plain truth about the vices and absurdities of the Parliamentary representation, or the dimensions of corruption, Pitt and his father, as well as Fox, Burke, and Shelburne, would have been within the reach of the long arm of authority. Pitt was able to do in 1794 what North could not have done in 1780 precisely because

[1] The judge congratulated the jury on their verdict. Grey wrote to his wife, "If Hardy is hanged there is no safety for anyone: innocence no longer affords protection to persons obnoxious to those in power, and I do not know how soon it may come my turn." Lord Rosebery defends Pitt and coercion on the ground that "it was impossible to speak with confidence of the population of England. All that was known was an enormous circulation of the works of Paine, an extensive manufactory of small-arms, a considerable and undefinable amount of furtive organisation." It would surely be truer to say that no Government ever had such opportunities of knowing all about an agitation. The "furtive organisation" was modelled on Pitt's own precedents in 1782; the magistrates were zealous and industrious in exploring, and Pitt's spies were ubiquitous. Further the societies courted publicity: there is something aggressive in the way they advertised their proceedings.

the middle classes who were friendly to the one agitation were apprehensive of the other. The middle classes would have resisted in 1780 the tyranny Pitt created in 1794; but in the panic which followed the outrages of the French Revolution there danced before their terrified vision the phantom of a class that they regarded as an upstart in politics organising on a great scale an outbreak like the Gordon Riots. The support the middle classes gave to the Government is no justification of its tyranny, and no confirmation of its attempt to prove that the agitations were seditious, in any other sense than that in which all movements of reform are described by their opponents in that summary phrase. It would be truer to say that that support is itself a charge against the Government, for it was the result of a concerted and deliberate attempt to inspire the country with an unreasoning terror in the interests not of the constitution, but of the classes that trembled for obnoxious and threatened prerogatives. Nothing could be more congenial to the society that hated all reform than a general atmosphere of confusion and alarm in which men who had no interest in the injustices of the existing system mistook all criticism and discontent for the savagery of the sansculottes. Dundas was honest enough to admit that he thought it a pity that all the apparatus of coercion had not been in existence and in use in 1780, a genial suggestion for Pitt who might in that case have found himself in the pillory.

The Government, probably against Pitt's better mind,[1] resolved to repress all opposition by force, and to do that they set themselves industriously to circulate fictitious stories of secret rebellion, and to encourage official and unofficial violence against innocent and honourable men who allowed themselves to speculate at all on political questions. They began with the proclamation in the winter of 1792 calling upon magistrates to explore the public-houses for scraps of casual sedition. In the case of the great state trials of 1794 they made an attempt to poison the public mind,

[1] Lord Campbell attributes the persecution chiefly to Lord Loughborough.

which has been condemned in unsparing language by Lord Campbell. The Secret Committee, that is to say a Ministerial Committee in the House of Commons, declared "that a treacherous and detestable conspiracy had been found for subverting the existing laws and constitution, and for introducing the system of anarchy and confusion which had lately prevailed in France," and this recital was quoted as proof of the guilt of Thomas Hardy and his associates when on their trial for High Treason. This monstrous attempt to prejudice a criminal trial would, if men had not lost their heads, have recoiled on the Government, for it was the result of that trial to show that the Secret Committee's report was entirely false. But the proceeding was quite characteristic of the methods of the Government who persisted in calling every reformer a Jacobin and a traitor, and who succeeded in carrying the repressive laws of 1794 into execution precisely because the country magistrates were all under the influence of the class terror which had produced the Acts themselves. The Government made themselves the interpreters of the terror of the governing classes, and instead of announcing that they were determined to suppress all criticism by coercion, represented, fraudulently, as the event showed, all criticism as implying sedition.

In another respect the acquiescence in the suppression of criticism was an argument against that suppression. The danger to the constitution during these years from the efforts of the reformers was insignificant, for the general temper was impatient and fearful of all criticism and speculation. The forces of an immobile selfishness have never marshalled such an army of defence as that which had rallied to the cause of authority. During the American War a weak Government had maintained itself for years against all attacks though the aristocracy were divided and the middle classes were eager for reform. During the war against the French Republic the Government had much more on its side than the Court with its powers of punishment and reward; it was supported by the aristocracy with its scattered and

outlying dependants, by the magistrates, who still had a tight hand on all local life and pursuits, and by the middle classes whose demure discontents had vanished in their dreams of guillotines. When Fox urged that it might be an advantage to Scotland to adopt in part the English law rather than transport honest men for the crime of thinking the existing Parliamentary representation imperfect, Dundas boasted that the man who made such a proposal in Scotland would never escape alive. It was to hunt down a small minority whose opinions, so far from casting a fatal spell over the English mind, exposed those who held them to a social persecution, that all the liberties of England were withdrawn.

It would be unreasonable to pretend that the Government during these years had no need for vigilance or alarm. The popular meetings were a distraction and an embarrassment to Pitt just as the county meetings had been to North during a war in which the governing classes thought as much was at stake as Pitt believed to be at stake in the struggle with France. Even Chatham had argued that the separation of America from Great Britain would mark the beginning of the decline of Britain's greatness. There was acute Irish discontent which broke out into rebellion, just as there was acute Irish discontent only stopping short of rebellion in 1782. Further the popular meetings were organised by a different order in society, an order with which the Government had no sympathy and with which they were genuinely alarmed; they were in truth the beginnings of political democracy; their language, though not more violent than the language used during the American War, was coloured by the startling phrases of the French Revolution, and before war broke out, embassies were sent to the French Convention, which were, to say the least of it, neither discreet nor respectful in their allusions to the existing régime in England. The Government were alive too to the sharp provocations of distress and high prices, and men who had helped to foment discontent in other days, trembled before

the mysterious menace of that French Revolution which Pitt described in a brilliant phrase as "the liquid fire of Jacobinism." But with the fullest recognition of their difficulties, it is impossible to acquit them of stimulating the cruelties of panic, and of using that panic to make an unwarrantable invasion of all the rights and liberties of Englishmen. It was the essence of their case that there were treasonable enterprises meditated by bodies of disaffected Englishmen who meant to give assistance to the French. That hypothesis has been completely destroyed. The London Corresponding Society itself, which no language was harsh enough to describe, was engaged at the moment of its forcible dissolution in 1801, after persecution had made it a secret organisation, in discussing the advisability of volunteering for resistance to the expected French invasion. When all the extraordinary equipment of inquisition is remembered, the vast ramification of a system which made every scavenger a detective, the zeal of the magistrates, the organisation of official and unofficial informers, the most remarkable fact about the French war is the insignificant quantity of treason that was discovered in a population that was often in great scarcity.[1]

Fox judged his countrymen much more truly than Pitt, when he argued that Englishmen would never look to foreign intervention to right their wrongs, or offer to invaders any other welcome than armed resistance. The Government used these legendary conspiracies to make all public meetings impossible though they had already discovered that they could punish inflammatory criticisms by imprisonment under the ordinary law, and it must not be forgotten that every blow struck at freedom, during these years, multiplied and aggravated popular grievances that were serious and sensible. Even men who cared as little about freedom

[1] As access to the Home Office Records is prohibited to students, it is impossible to measure exactly the secret evidence on which Pitt acted, but it is significant that Jackson, a French emissary who visited England in 1793 to see what were the prospects of democratic help in case of invasion, found the result very discouraging. Lecky, *Ireland*, vol. iii. p. 233.

as the frightened landlords of 1794 might have doubted the wisdom of so terrible a confession that their own rule and the liberties of England could live together no longer.

These were the conditions under which the Reign of Terror was instituted in England and Scotland. The proceedings began with prosecutions under the existing law. John Frost, one of Pitt's former associates in the cause of Parliamentary Reform, was sentenced to six months' imprisonment for a few words of desultory republicanism in a private conversation at a coffee-house. A Nonconformist minister at Plymouth was sentenced to four years' imprisonment for saying in a sermon that the King was placed upon the throne on condition of keeping certain laws and rules, and that if he did not keep them, he had no more right to the crown than the Stuarts had. Several bill-stickers, who could neither read nor write, were sent to prison for six months for posting a proclamation by the London Corresponding Society, declaring, in reply to certain accusations by the Loyal Association against Republicans and Levellers, that the Society stood for the purity of the Constitution. A doctor named William Hudson was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for "seditious words in a coffee-house after dinner after two large glasses of punch." These prosecutions, and very many others were the result of the inquisition which the Government called upon the magistrates to establish in all the restaurants and public-houses. They are eclipsed by the larger pageants of tyranny for which the Government had to thank Dundas and his tools in Scotland, and on which Pitt publicly congratulated judges whose names are still remembered with horror.

Thomas Muir, a brilliant young advocate had interested himself in the efforts to stimulate attention in Scotland in political questions. He had helped to form a society in Glasgow called "the Friends of the Constitution and of the People," to co-operate with the Whig "Friends of the People" in London, a society to which no one was admitted until he had signed a declaration of his allegiance

to the Government of Great Britain as established in King, Lords, and Commons. He had addressed various meetings, and it was clear even from hostile witnesses, that his language was moderate, and his policy not much different from the policy which Pitt had recommended in 1782. He was indicted for sedition; the jury, chosen by the judges, consisted of men belonging to Associations that had already condemned him by public resolutions as an enemy of the constitution, and the Lord Justice Clerk, instead of summing up, made a speech to show that any criticism of the Government, or of the Parliamentary representation was sedition. This "coarse and dexterous ruffian," as Lord Cockburn has called him, asked the jury to consider whether Mr. Muir's conduct appeared to them, as it appeared to him, to be sedition. "As Mr. Muir has brought many witnesses to prove his general good behaviour, and his recommending peaceable measures and petitions to Parliament, it is your business to judge how far this should operate in his favour, in opposition to the evidence on the other side.

"Mr. Muir might have known that no attention could be paid to such a rabble. What right had they to representation? He could have told them that the Parliament would never listen to their petition. How could they think of it? A government in every country should be just like a corporation; and in this country, it is made up of the landed interest, which alone has a right to be represented; as for the rabble, who have nothing but personal property, what hold has the nation of them? What security for the payment of their taxes? They may pack up all their property on their backs, and leave the country in the twinkling of an eye, but landed property cannot be removed.

"The tendency of such a conduct was certainly to produce a spirit of revolt; and if what was demanded should be refused, to take it by force.

"Mr. Muir's plan of discouraging revolt, and all sort of tumult, was certainly political: for until everything was ripe

for a general insurrection, any tumult or disorder could only tend, as he himself said, to ruin his cause; he was in the meantime, however, evidently poisoning the minds of the common people, and preparing them for rebellion.

"Gentlemen, you will take the whole into your consideration. I now leave it with you, and have no doubt of your returning such a verdict as will do you honour."[1]

The language of the judges after the verdict had been given showed that they were worthy colleagues of Lord Justice Braxfield. One of them, Lord Swinton, remarked that "now that torture" was "happily abolished" there was no punishment adequate for Mr. Muir's offence, and that the Roman law which must for these purposes be considered the Scottish common law, had left it to their discretion to send Mr. Muir to the gallows, to throw him to wild beasts, or to transport him.[2] The Lord Justice Clerk himself in a final display of the serene and impartial majesty of the law, said that the applause in court, which had broken out at the end of a manly and able defence by Muir had convinced him that it would be dangerous to leave Mr. Muir in the country, and that the only question was whether he should be transported for life or for fourteen years. The milder alternative was chosen, and Muir was sent to Botany Bay with convicted felons, for no other crime[3] than for that of demanding a reform which Pitt had urged whilst we were at war with America and with half of Europe, and which the Duke of Richmond had championed in the Lords when the Gordon Riots were making a Bedlam of the capital. Muir was punished because the law was administered in Scotland so as to make the existing arrangements for Parliamentary representation, and the integrity of the Scottish corporations, byewords for corruption, secure from all criticism. It was of that trial that William Pitt, who knew the law, and knew the meaning of agitations for Parliamentary reform, declared

[1] P. 231, *State Trials*, vol. xxiii. [2] P. 234.

[3] There was not a word or a sentiment in Muir's speeches which had not been spoken in Parliament, or expressed in resolutions by Pitt's societies.

that "no doubt could be entertained either of the legality of the trials under review or of the propriety of the manner in which the Lords of Justiciary had exercised their discretion upon this occasion. He thought that the judges would have been highly culpable if, vested as they were with discretionary powers, they had not employed them for the present punishment of such daring delinquents, and the suppression of doctrines so dangerous to the country."[1]

The Scottish judges were soon to show that they were just as ready to punish other "daring delinquents" of the same kind. A Mr. Palmer was indicted at Perth for circulating a seditious libel. By way of adding a certain incidental finesse to the extraordinary injustice with which Muir had been treated, the Lord Advocate had actually urged as a proof against him that a letter was found in his papers addressed to Mr. Palmer, who was then awaiting trial, thus contriving to strike a simultaneous blow at two persons. It was shown that Palmer's only offence consisted in circulating a pamphlet, which he had not written himself, containing not a single expression to which parallel could not be found in Burke's own speeches. The trial itself differed little from that of Muir. Witnesses were browbeaten, and Lord Abercromby, in summing up, maintained in the form of an indignant question that it was sedition to assert that the people had a right to universal suffrage. Palmer was sentenced to seven years' transportation. The other victims of that "discretionary power" which Pitt thought had been so wisely exercised against Muir, were Skirving, Margarot, and Gerrald. Skirving was the Secretary of the great Convention which had been assembled at Edinburgh in January 1793, in imitation of the Convention in London ten years earlier, for the purpose of demanding Parliamentary Reform. The Convention adopted various ridiculous titles and flourishes from the new French

[1] Pitt also refused to see anything objectionable in the choice by the presiding judge (according to Scotch law at that time) of jurors who belonged to an Association that had already condemned Muir.

vocabulary, and it provoked the authorities by asserting that it would refuse to disperse; but its meetings were extremely orderly, its language not more violent than language that had been held ten years earlier, and the only disturbance was created by the police. Skirving, Margarot, and Gerrald were all tried for sedition, in the same spirit, and by the same methods[1] as Muir and Palmer, and sentenced to fourteen years' transportation each. Margarot and Gerrald were delegates from the London Corresponding Society, and it was a piece of good fortune for the Government that they had brought themselves within reach of the discretionary powers of the Scottish judges.

One more trial that occurred before the Government suspended the Habeas Corpus Act must be mentioned because it illustrates the circumstances that gave rise to the rumours of armed insurrection. A Mr. Walker, an eminently respectable citizen, and a valiant Liberal, was indicted with six other persons at Lancaster for a conspiracy to overthrow the constitution and Government, and to aid and abet the French in case they should invade this kingdom. The trial took place in April. The chief charge against Mr. Walker was that he had purchased arms for the purpose of rebellion. It was proved that Mr. Walker had purchased a few firearms, as a very necessary precaution for the defence of his house against the violence of the loyalist associations, and the witness on whom the Government relied was convicted of perjury, Mr. Walker being "honourably acquitted."

Hitherto the Government had conducted their campaign under the ordinary law, confining themselves to issuing alarmist proclamations, to stimulating the vigilance and the zeal of the magistrates, and to encouraging an "organisation" of loyalist associations which was very active in

[1] Gerrald objected to one juryman on the ground that he had already declared in private conversation that he would condemn any member of the British Convention. The objection was dismissed, and the Lord Justice Clerk remarked, "As this objection is stated, I hope there is not a gentleman of the jury or any man in this court who has not expressed the same sentiment."

denouncing reformers. In May 1794 they adopted exceptional measures. The prosecutions had not silenced the platform, for there had been meetings at Leeds, Wakefield, Bradford, Halifax, and Sheffield, and a great meeting at Chalk Farm, and arrangements were in progress for a great convention in London, in spite of the discouragement of the "Friends of the People," who thought such a project might help the Government. Suddenly, the papers of the Corresponding Society, and the Constitutional Society were seized. Some dozen of their members were sent to the Tower to await their trial for High Treason, and Pitt proposed the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act on the strength of a report of the secret Committee of his supporters in Parliament on the captured documents. There had been nothing before this to show that there was any conspiracy, except the conviction of a wretched spy Watt, whose enterprises were more a subject for contempt than alarm. The other convictions signified nothing more than the condemnation by selected juries and judges of the type of Braxfield, of all criticism of the Parliamentary representation. But in May 1794 the Government declared the state to be in danger, and they took two extreme steps to impress the nation with the reality of the vast conspiracy they pictured. They invoked all the most solemn terrors of the law, and they withdrew all the guarantees of responsible justice and personal freedom. It is important to remember the exact sequence of events, for the tyranny of the Government has been excused on the ground that it represented "not the coercion of a people by the government, but the coercion of a government by the people."[1] Pitt, in proposing the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, drew a picture of a hideous conspiracy that had been at work sometimes by silent machinations, sometimes by open intimidation, for two years, arranging to build up a convention that should replace the existing constitution. He noted that the conspirators had formed corresponding

[1] Lord Rosebery, *Life of Pitt*, p. 167.

societies in the large manufacturing towns, which they thought likely, because of their "ignorant and profligate" population, to welcome their project of rebellion. This was the ridiculous light in which Pitt represented the operations of a society that had naturally looked to the large towns where there was no Parliamentary representation for an enthusiastic support of the cause of reform. It would be easy enough to understand such language from the supporter of the Government who argued that "the very advanced price at which seats were now represented to be sold, was not (if true) a proof of its corruption, but of the increasing wealth and prosperity of the country."[1] But a Prime Minister who persuades Parliament to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act by such a description of the nation's danger, can scarcely be exonerated from any share in creating the public terror which Lord Rosebery represents as "coercing" the Government.

In the trials of Thomas Hardy and Horne Tooke the Government had every opportunity of making good their accusations. It was their contention that these Societies, whilst in their open documents they abjured violence and demanded reform, were busy with clandestine insurrection. The books of the Corresponding Society and the Constitutional Society had been seized without warning. The secretary was arrested so suddenly that his wife died afterwards in consequence of the shock, and his house was turned inside out for proofs and compromising records The whole array of soft-slippered spies and mercenary eavesdroppers who had insinuated themselves into various branches of the Corresponding Society, and had tried to tempt hot-headed enthusiasts into spasmodic treason were passed through the witness-box to do their worst. Prisoners, untried and unaccused, were recalled from the cells into which they had been swept by the Government, when the normal restraints of the law had been suspended, to face the sudden severities of cross-examination. For eight days

[1] Mr. Anstruther.

the issue was discussed; all the archives of the Society[1] were submitted to the full light of the public view; all the secrets of the meetings, correspondence, routine, and programmes were extracted; all the hoardings of private treachery and the greedy accumulations of eager informers, whose reputation and rewards were involved in a conviction, were arrayed in an imposing column of slander and suspicion, and the hypothesis on which the Government rested their case was shattered and laid bare. If the arguments by which Pitt justified his destruction of freedom were correct in fact, the ringleaders of the two obnoxious Societies could never have survived that minute and rigorous scrutiny into everything they had said, or written, or planned, or whispered amongst friends.

In spite of this rebuff the Government persisted in its alarmist policy, and one of its members only wished that the jury had been as wise as he. The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended from May 23rd 1794 to July 1st 1795, and the Government made use of their Bill to send a number of men to prison, and keep them there without trial. The London Corresponding Society held a meeting in April 1795, and another against Place's advice in October 1795.[2] The second meeting was held three days before the opening of Parliament. By this time there was a strong popular opinion running against the Government, due to great and real distress, and the pressure of taxation. Wheat had gone up from fifty-eight shillings a quarter in February to one hundred and eight shillings. There were disorderly demonstrations, and the King made his way to Parliament, amidst loud cries of "No Pitt," "No famine," and unhappily a small stone or bullet broke one of the windows of the King's carriage. The King behaved with the courage and sang-froid that he had shown during the Gordon riots. The whole thing had no more to do with Jacobinism than the

[1] A great deal was made by the Government of the preparations for arming, but it was proved at the trials that these preparations were merely in self-defence against loyalist rioters. One reform association had announced itself in the press by public advertisement as a "military association."

[2] Mr. Graham Wallas' *Life of Place*, p. 25.

protests against the American War during its last years. It was the behaviour of a proletariat that was threatened with starvation. But it was just what the Government wanted, and two Bills were rapidly introduced which finally silenced the platform. One Bill, the Treasonable Practices Bill, was introduced by Grenville into the Lords, and the other, the Seditious Meetings Bill was introduced by Pitt into the Commons. The former of these Bills introduced a new law of treason. "The proof of overt acts of treason was now to be dispensed with; and any person compassing and devising the death, bodily harm, or restraint of the King, or his deposition, or the levying of war upon him, in order to compel him to change his measures or counsels, or who should express such designs by any printing, writing, preaching, or malicious and advised speaking, should suffer the penalties of high treason.[1] Any person who by writing, printing, preaching, or speaking should incite the people to hatred or contempt of his Majesty, or the established government and constitution of the realm, would be liable to the penalties of a high misdemeanour; and on a second conviction, to banishment or transportation. The act was to remain in force during the life of the King, and till the end of the next session after his decease."[2]

The second Bill provided that no meeting, not convened by the sheriff or other local authorities was to take place until notice had been given by seven householders and sent to the magistrate. The magistrate was to attend the meeting, and anyone who prevented his going might suffer death without benefit of clergy. His powers at the meeting were paramount. If any speaker said anything likely to excite hatred or contempt of his Majesty or the Government, or the constitution, he was to be apprehended, and resistance was to be a felony punishable by death. The magistrate could break up a meeting, and was completely

[1] The provision concerning preaching and advised speaking was afterwards omitted.

[2] Erskine May, *Constitutional History of England*, vol. ii. p. 318.

indemnified for any loss of life or wounds that might happen in his efforts to disperse it. Further, any rooms in which debating societies met were to be licensed by two magistrates, and a magistrate could enter at any time. This Bill was to continue in force for three years. It is important to remember that before introducing these Bills the Government had found in the case of Henry Yorke who was tried in July 1795, and sentenced to two years' imprisonment on a charge of conspiring to defame the House of Commons, and to excite a spirit of disaffection and sedition amongst the people, that they could punish platform speeches under existing laws. Yorke was a youth of twenty-two, and Rooke, before whom he was tried, admitted that his speech, made at Sheffield the previous year, would have been innocent, if it had been made at another time. Sir James Fitz-James Stephen remarks that this was the first instance of a prosecution in which the law of conspiracy was applied to seditious offences.

The Acts put an end for the time to all public discussion, for to hint that Birmingham with its 70,000 inhabitants had as good a right to be represented in the House of Commons as a decayed borough with half a dozen electors was to render oneself liable to a prosecution for sedition. The London Corresponding Society tried to evade the Act by sending delegates to address small meetings, but the attempt broke down, and when in 1796 they tried to hold a public meeting the magistrates arrested some of the chief speakers, and dispersed the meeting. But the final blow had not yet been struck. In 1798 the Habeas Corpus Act was again suspended, and the following year Pitt carried a Bill to suppress the societies of United Englishmen, United Britons, United Scotsmen, United Irishmen, and the London Corresponding Society. The latter Bill contained a provision that any society which should act in separate or distinct branches should be deemed and taken to be an unlawful combination and confederacy, and that any persons maintaining correspondence or intercourse with it should be deemed guilty of

an unlawful combination and confederacy, the penalty for which was seven years' transportation. The same year the Seditious Meetings Act expired, but in April 1801, the Government renewed the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act (the suspension of 1798 expiring early that year), and revived the Seditious Meetings Act by a Bill of a single section. The sacrifice of English freedom was now complete, and we may say of Pitt, adapting Swift's language about something else, that he had asked of the nation all the good qualities of its mind as the price of the maintenance of the governing classes, "which perhaps for a less purchase would be thought but an indifferent bargain."

In that first dark chapter of the struggle between the governing classes and democracy in England, a struggle that lasted,[1] with much the same methods, long after the French war was over, there is one illuminating page, for it is enriched by the record of a virtue which has never quite disappeared from English politics, the patient heroism of resistance. Persecution almost always produces eccentricities, exaggerations, fanaticisms morbid, theatrical, bizarre, sharpened and separated from the gentler influences of the normal and tranquil energies of society. Persecuted men tend to hold their convictions not only with tenacity but with acrimony. These types are not wanting in the Revolutionary struggle. But of the men who then went to prison, or to Botany Bay, or to a moral exile[2] at home, there is this to be said, that

[1] Liverpool, who suspended the Habeas Corpus Act in 1817, was President of the Board of Trade (as Hawkesbury) in Pitt's Government in 1794.

[2] I am indebted to Mr. John B. Chubb for leave to print the following pathetic letter from S. T. Coleridge to Mr. Chubb's great-grandfather, which shows how terrible was the social ban on reformers:—

Addressed to Mr. JOHN CHUBB, Bridgewater, in 1797 or 1798.

DEAR SIR,—I write to you on the subject of Thelwall. He has found by experience that neither his own health or that of his wife and children can be preserved in London; and were it otherwise, yet his income is inadequate to maintain him there. He is therefore under the necessity of fixing his residence in the country. But by his particular exertions in the propagation of those principles, which we hold sacred and of the highest importance, he has become, as you well know, particularly unpopular, through every part of the kingdom—in

they risked everything for the cause of freedom, that they had to master every kind of fear and selfish passion, that they gave their lives to work neglected by all others, the education of a class that had known nothing of politics, that they were strangers to all personal ambitions, and that they bore their hard lot, in some cases almost as terrible a lot as the imagination can picture, with a manly and intrepid composure. Many of the reformers were working men like

every part of the kingdom therefore some odium and inconvenience must be incurred by those who should be instrumental in procuring him a cottage there—but are Truth and Liberty of so little importance that we owe no sacrifice to them? And because with talents very great, and disinterestedness undoubted, he has evinced himself in activity of courage, superior to any other patriot, must his country for this be made a wilderness of water to him?—There are many reasons for his preferring this to any other part of the kingdom, he will here find the society of men equal to himself in talents, and probably superior in acquired knowledge—of men, who differ from each other very widely in many very important opinions yet unite in the one great duty of unbounded *tolerance*. If the day of darkness and tempest should come, it is most probable, that the influence of T. would be very great on the lower classes—it may therefore prove of no mean utility to the cause of Truth and Humanity, that he had spent some years in a society, where his natural impetuosity had been disciplined into patience, and salutary scepticism, and the slow energies of a *calculating* spirit.

But who shall get him a cottage here? I have *no power*, and T. Poole is precluded from it by the dreadful state of his poor Mother's health and by his connection with the Benefit Club—the utilities of which he estimates very high, and these, he thinks, would be materially affected by any activity in favor of T. —Besides, has he not already taken his share of odium? has he not already almost alienated, certainly very much cooled, the affections of some of his relations, by his exertions on *my* account? And why should *one* man do *all*? But, it must be left to every man's private mind to determine, whether or no his *particular* circumstances do or do not justify him in keeping aloof from all interference in such subjects. J. T. is now at Swansea, and expects an answer from me respecting the possibility of his settling here, and he requested me to write to you. I have done it—and you will be so kind (if in your power, *to-day*) to give me one or two lines, briefly informing me whether or no *your* particular circumstances enable you to exert yourself in taking a cottage for him—*anywhere* 5 or 6 miles round Stowey. He means to live in perfect retirement—neither taking pupils or anything else. . . .

It is painful to ask that of a person which he may find it equally distressing to grant or deny—(But I do not ask anything; but simply lay before you the calculations on *our* side of the subject—). Your own mind will immediately suggest those on the other side—and I doubt not, you will decide according to the preponderance.—Believe me with respect, etc. S. T. COLERIDGE.

Hardy (a shoemaker), but some of the ringleaders were men of the middle class. Gerrald was the son of wealthy parents; Margarot, the son of a general merchant and wine importer; Joyce, a pupil of Dr. Price's and the author of an arithmetic; Bonney, an attorney; Sharp, an engraver; Kyd, a man of letters; Richter, son of an artist; and Holcraft, a dramatist. To understand what it meant to be a Liberal from 1794 to 1800 we must not look merely at the ferocities of the statute-book. The country was under a vast system of espionage, and the whole army of officials, deprived of their votes by the Rockingham Ministry, were so many agents, scattered throughout the country, enforcing the displeasure or the strong will of the Government. Liberalism meant, in many professions, a career closed abruptly;[1] for men and women of the middle class it meant separation from their friends by a yawning chasm of intolerance and terror, for the obscure and the defenceless it meant perhaps dreary years of languishing existence in prison, without trial or notice. The organisation of loyalist mobs, the concrete expression of a militant sycophancy, enlisted great numbers of informers and destroyed Dr. Priestley's house in 1791, amidst the scandalous indifference of the magistrates; they afterwards destroyed Mr. Walker's house in Manchester, and arranged other riots in other parts of the country. They attempted in vain to provoke Fox's neighbours to attack his house. The men who opened their mouths against Pitt's policy for ten years had to face risk of imprisonment, social ostracism, the mercenary violence of Milo's bullies, and every species of slander on their motives. There were men and women of all ranks who chose that bitter persecution, rather than seek refuge or reward in a guilty silence, and a state can rely on no stouter quality to resist invasion or decay than the texture of which such temperaments are made.

In the great work of resistance the Parliamentary Opposition played their part courageously. Their position differed from that of the enthusiasts outside, who believed

[1] See M. Angellier's *Burns*.

that however many of its missionaries might fall in the first conflicts the cause of popular government was irresistible, and its triumph would mean the final establishment of freedom and justice. Fox and his friends had many alarms about the issue of the popular movement. The Whig wing of the Reform movement deprecated a great many of the demonstrations of the popular societies, partly as a question of tactics, for they knew that the Government welcomed any pretext for repression, but partly also because they were afraid that the struggle between the Government and the extreme theories might end in anarchy and confusion. Fox had the advantages and the disadvantages of his position as Parliamentary leader. He defended English freedom with a passion which belonged to his profound sense of the grandeur of England, but his views of the great issue unlike the enthusiasm of the democrats embraced a keen appreciation of all the traditions of English public life and party conflicts. It was in the name of the history of England that he fought the whole series of the Government's tyrannies, but to many of his allies outside Parliament that history was not a great achievement to be defended, but a great usurpation to be undone. Fox and his friends regarded the constitution with the pride of men who felt that their party had invented its structure, and that it was adequate for the protection of the nation in emergencies. He was indignant with the societies who sent messages to the French Convention disparaging the English constitution, on the one hand, and was much more indignant with the Government for making haste to show that the constitution was not a genuine protection for Englishmen's liberties on the other.[1] There was

[1] "He had signed a declaration of attachment to the constitution, because he thought it of importance at the present moment to let foreigners, and especially the French, see that men of all descriptions were firmly attached to it; that they had been grossly deceived by the addresses from this country, which told them that their doctrines were very generally adopted here; that they had been deceived by the ministers' proclamations, stating that there was great danger from their doctrines; that they had been deceived by the alarms expressed by some of his own friends."

seldom any mutual confidence between Fox and the extreme democrats, except during the agitation against the 1795 Bills.[1] On one occasion Horne Tooke in proposing a toast at a dinner called the attention of the spies in the room to his assertion that Parliament was a sink of corruption, and, he added, "the Parliamentary Opposition is a sink of corruption." Fox fought the battle with a strenuous zeal which dissolved all lesser animosities, partly because he believed that everything precious to Englishmen was at stake, partly because he could not bear that less powerful men should suffer imprisonment or other forms of punishment for holding opinions that he could avow in comparative safety. But he fought it without the help of those illusions about human nature, and the rapid triumph of justice which sustained many of the stoutest hearts in those days of martyrdom.

It is fortunate that before the panic became acute in England, the Opposition won a bloodless victory of supreme importance. Fox's Libel Bill was carried through both Houses in 1792. In the famous case of the Dean of St. Asaph, Dr. Shipley, who had recommended a pamphlet by Sir

[1] Cf. Resolution of the London Corresponding Society at their meeting in Marylebone Fields, 1795 (see *History of the Two Acts*, p. 653): "That the thanks of this meeting be given to the Right. Hon. Charles James Fox, M.P., for his firm, determined, and unequivocal opposition to these Bills both in and out of Parliament. And more especially for his manly and constitutional declaration, 'That neither the Commons, nor the Lords, nor the King, nor the three combined as the Legislature, can be considered as having power to enslave the people; but that they may either separately, or unitedly do such acts as would justify the resistance of the people.'"

Cf. also *Memorials and Correspondence*, vol. iii. p. 135 (1796): "At present I think that we ought to go further towards agreeing with the democratic or popular party than at any former period; for the following reasons:—We, as a party, I fear, can do nothing, and the contest must be between the Court and the Democrats. These last, without our assistance, will be either too weak to resist the Court,—and then comes Mr. Hume's Euthanasia, which you and I think the worst of all events,—or if they are strong enough, being wholly unmixed with any aristocratic leaven, and full of resentment against us for not joining them, will go probably to greater excesses, and bring on the only state of things which can make a man doubt whether the despotism of monarchy is the worst of all evils."

William Jones entitled *A Dialogue between a Gentleman and a Farmer*, to a society of reformers, it had been laid down by Lord Mansfield that the question of whether a publication was libellous or not was a pure question of law, to be decided by the judges, and that all the jury had to decide was whether the defendant had or had not published it. If this judgment had been left as the final decision "the Star Chamber," says Lord Campbell, "might have been re-established in this country." Fox's famous Bill established expressly the right of the jury to decide the guilt or innocence of the publication as well as its authorship, and thereby restored the freedom of the press which would otherwise have been at the mercy of the judges. The Act passed as a Declaratory Act, and it is to Pitt's credit that, however careless he was afterwards about freedom, he gave Fox his frank and cordial support in this momentous matter. Lord Camden had been an ardent supporter of this doctrine for half a century, but the man who did most towards effecting this triumph in 1792 was Erskine, who had been Dr. Shipley's counsel. "Erskine," says Lord Campbell, "saved the liberties of his country." It can at least be said of him without exaggeration that during the darkest hours of the Reign of Terror, all the energies of his splendid genius and patriotism were spent in the brave and disinterested championship of freedom, and that no one achievement during those years did so much to check the fatal devastations of a spirit which threatened finally to extinguish the rights of Englishmen, as Erskine's immortal defence of Thomas Hardy and Horne Tooke. Like his friends he made his sacrifice to duty. Just as his brother Henry Erskine preferred to speak his mind, rather than hold, by an inglorious silence, his office of Dean of the Faculty at Edinburgh, so Thomas Erskine chose to defend Paine, and lose the Attorney-Generalship to the Prince of Wales. M. Ribot has finely said of Erskine that the love of liberty was part of his talent. It is at any rate true that that passion has left his career, in spite of a vanity that lent itself to an easy and

effective ridicule, a sublime and immortal memory to his country.

Unhappily, Fox's Libel Bill was the solitary Parliamentary success of the Opposition, and with that exception, its history is the history of an heroic but ineffectual resistance to the cruelties of panic and selfishness. That resistance was mainly a resistance in Parliament, and the brunt of the fight fell upon Fox, Sheridan, and Grey in the Commons, and Lansdowne,[1] Lauderdale, Stanhope, and Bedford in the Lords. It is only necessary to look at the division lists to understand how hopeless a task the Opposition had undertaken. There were two debates in March 1794 on the infamous Scottish trials, and the Opposition was supported by 32 votes and 46 votes to 171 and 152 votes respectively. The minority on the first division on the Repeal of the Habeas Corpus Act in May 1794 was 39 to 201; on Sheridan's motion to repeal the suspension in January 1795 it was 41 to 185. The same month the Bill for continuing the suspension was carried by 239 to 53. In the stern fight against the Treason and Sedition Bills in 1795, the best vote for the Opposition was 70 to 269, and in Fox's last effort before his despairing secession, on his proposal to repeal the Treason and Sedition Bills, in 1797, he mustered 52 votes to 260.

The struggle was for the most part in Parliament, but there was one great effort to stimulate remonstrances in the country. Fox had argued during the discussion of the Bill for suspending the Habeas Corpus Act, that Pitt had no right to adopt such a revolutionary measure without taking the sense of the country, and in the autumn of 1795 the Opposition decided that the method of protest, which had been used with great effect in the American War, must be

[1] It is interesting to notice the gradual tentative "rapprochement" between Fox and Shelburne, who had become Lord Lansdowne. The bitter memories of 1783 were only slowly sponged out by Lansdowne's stout and fearless opposition to the French war and domestic oppression, a record that justifies his epitaph as a man who never feared the people. Fox dined with him for the first time in 1795.

employed against the proposal for the final extinction of the platform. The precedents of those times were evidently very much in the minds of the leaders of the Opposition, who knew what it meant to place the Government of the day beyond the reach of criticism, and Lord Derby had declared that public meetings had shortened the American War. There was a further stimulus to concerted action of this kind. The Government had, in Fox's words, an "alliance out of doors," *i.e.* a great organisation made up partly of disinterested and frightened patriots, but largely of contractors, officials, dependants, which asserted that the country approved of the Government's Bills. A great meeting of the Whig Club was held in November 1795 with Bedford in the chair, and Fox said there ought to be meetings everywhere, and a resolution was passed that meetings of the people in their respective districts should be immediately called for the purpose of petitioning Parliament against the Bill.[1] The result was an agitation of some dimensions, though unhappily it did not influence the House of Commons. Fox himself presided over a mass meeting in Palace Yard, Westminster, on the 16th of November. The London Corresponding Society held a great meeting a few days earlier, and other meetings, including one at Edinburgh, were held in various parts of the country. According to the *History of the Two Acts*, sixty-five petitions were presented for the Bill with 30,000 signatures, and ninety-four petitions against with over 130,000. An amusing example is given in that publication of the influence of Government officials, in a letter analysing the signatures to a counter-petition in favour of the Bills from Portsmouth, which showed that the petition was signed by forty-seven persons, and every one of them was either a contractor, or a revenue officer, or a public official in the service of the Government. The Whig Club held another meeting on 19th October 1795,[2] at which Fox declared that the sense of the country had

[1] Jephson, *History of the Two Acts*, vol. i. p. 209.
[2] *History of the Two Acts*, p. 780.

been roused, and that they must form an association such as Erskine, who was in the chair at the meeting, had suggested, for obtaining the repeal of the two Acts. The Annual Register corroborates this view. "Never had there appeared in the memory of the oldest man, so firm and decided a plurality of adversaries to the ministerial measures, as on this occasion: the interest of the public seemed so deeply at stake, that individuals not only of the decent, but of the most vulgar professions, gave up a considerable portion of their time and occupations in attending the numerous meetings that were called in every part of the kingdom, to the proposed intent of counteracting this attempt of the Ministry." It is difficult not to believe that this is an exaggerated account, though it is evident that there was a considerable opposition to the Government's proposals. The territorial power however was overwhelming, and the Government could afford to neglect the petitions against the Bill. "You will easily suppose that, in both Houses, we have opposed as strenuously as we were able (though with very small numbers) these Bills, upon their first introduction; but we have not thought this enough, and we are endeavouring at public meetings, and petitions against them in many parts of the country; how successful we shall be I know not; perhaps I am not very sanguine, but I feel myself quite sure it is right to try; and I hope you will agree with me, that, upon such an occasion it is an act of duty to brave all the calumny that will be thrown upon us on account of the countenance which we shall be represented as giving to the Corresponding Society and others, who are supposed to wish the overthrow of the Monarchy. There appears to me to be no choice at present but between an absolute surrender of the liberties of the people, and a vigorous exertion, attended, I admit, with considerable hazard, at a time like the present." [1]

"I have just time to tell you that our meeting yesterday succeeded beyond my hopes, incredibly numerous, yet very

[1] *Memorials and Correspondence*, vol. iii. p. 124, Nov. 15, 1795.

peaceable. The House of Commons is very bad indeed, and really seems to like these violent measures, which I consider as a symptom that the country, or at least the higher classes, are of the same opinion. However it is clear that *here* we have the popularity, and I suspect we shall have it universally among the lower classes. I need not tell you how much I dislike this state of things; but I cannot submit quite passively to Mr. Hume's Euthanasia which is coming on very fast."[1]

"However, I must just tell you that I think the country behaved better than I expected upon the subject of the bills, and that, except in Yorkshire (a most material exception, I admit), we have the people with us everywhere, in some parts of course more, and in others less decidedly. I take it we are strongest in and about the Metropolis. We made very bad divisions in the House of Commons, but nevertheless, I think we are much more of an opposition than we have been of late years. Thurlow came out at last, and though I do not think this a circumstance likely to have so much effect as some suppose, still, it is something. You will easily conceive that the *existing circumstances* (Pitt's favourite phrase) have made Lansdowne more cordial with us all than formerly, and I should hope the Duke of Leeds, Lord Moira, and other outlying parts of opposition, will soon see the necessity of acting more in concert, and if the public cry continues to be with us, I have no doubt but they will. Pitt certainly meant to parry our attacks, by the message from the King relative to peace, but how far that will answer his purpose I doubt much; I think not at all, unless he really gets peace, and as to the question whether he will get it or not, I think it so doubtful that I have altered my opinion upon it several times."[2]

"I do not know what to write to you about our politics here. The whole country seems dead, and yet they certainly showed some spirit while the Bills were pending; and I

[1] *Memorials and Correspondence*, vol. iii. p. 126, Nov. 17, 1795.

[2] *Ibid.*, vol. iii. pp. 127, 128, Dec. 24, 1795.

cannot help flattering myself that the great coldness at present is owing to people being in expectation and doubt with respect to what Pitt means to do in regard to peace."[1]

Two interesting facts about this agitation are worth notice. The first is that the practice followed in the economy agitation by which speakers who were hostile to the views of the meeting were given a fair hearing was carefully observed, and Lord Hood was listened to without any disorder at Fox's tremendous meeting in Palace Yard. The second is that as the anti-Reform campaign assumed in many cases the character of an anti-Dissenter Campaign, a fact that was partly due to the Liberal enthusiasm of Dr. Priestley and Dr. Price, it is not without importance, in view of the argument that the Test and Corporation Acts were virtually inoperative, to notice that at the Bedford County Meeting to oppose the Bills, the speakers insisted on the injustice of committing such vast authority to a magistrate or a sheriff, when those offices were closed against Dissenters.

In 1797 Fox thought the struggle was over and the doom of the liberties of his country finally sealed. During the American War the Whigs had chosen a secession from Parliament in 1776[2] as a dramatic protest, and Fox had an additional argument for secession in 1797 in the impotence to which, in his eyes, Pitt had reduced Parliament. He consoled Grey five years later for his father's peerage by remarking that the House of Commons had in a great measure ceased to be a place of much importance. "I am very much concerned indeed to hear of your father's peerage, more especially as I understand it vexes you very much, It is undoubtedly a provoking event: but according to my notions, the constitution of the country is declining so rapidly, that the House of Commons has in great measure ceased, and will shortly entirely cease to be a place of much import-

[1] *Memorials and Correspondence*, vol. iii. pp. 129, 130, Feb. 18, 1796.

[2] On that occasion Fox was against secession, *vide* letter to Rockingham, October 1776. *Memorials and Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 145.

ance. The whole, if not gone is going, and this consideration ought to make us less concerned about the particular situation (in regard to the public) in which we may be placed. The only glimmering of hope which I see is from the Court, when that shall fall into other hands, and the Court without any invidious consideration of particular characters, is a miserable foundation to build a system of Liberty and Reform upon."[1] The next three years of his life were spent in a tranquil and contented retirement in which Fox could half forget the miseries of his country amid the congenial and absorbing consolations of scholarship and literature. There is something that sums up all the irresistible fascination of Fox's nature in the picture of that hard and brave combat against oppression and injustice followed by the strenuous and contented calm, in which he discusses with his friends the supremacy of Homer and Virgil, or the attractions of Euripides and Ovid, or Porson's *Commentary on the Hecuba*, or asks a friend to interpret some obscurities in Moschus and Bion, or proposes to Wakefield a plan for a Greek dictionary suggested to him by the plan of a French dictionary which he had found mentioned in Condorcet's *Life of Voltaire*, or defends himself with an aphorism from Cicero for shooting partridges. There is not a trace in these transports over Homer, or Cicero, or Chaucer, or Ariosto, or in his little tournaments over questions of prosody, and metre, and the rival beauties of favourite poets, of the chagrin which many a man would have felt in the barren prospect of political exile that opened up to a statesman who twenty years earlier had won the proud supremacy of the House of Commons. In 1800 he left his retreat to censure the rejection by the Government of Napoleon's overtures, an act which few of Pitt's admirers now defend; and after one of the greatest speeches he ever made in Parliament, he found himself in a minority of 64 to 265. A few days later he was back again in his peaceful diversions, speculating on Porson's brilliant emendations, calculating what Ovid

[1] Letter to Grey, 1801. *Memorials and Correspondence*, vol. iii. p. 341.

owed to Apollonius, or Horace to Theocritus, and dismissing his intervention in politics with a few lines from Lycophron. "You have heard from the newspapers of course, of my going to the House of Commons last month. I did it more in consequence of the opinions of others than from my own; and when I came back, and read the lines 1451–53 of Lycophron

> Τι μακρα τλημων εις ανηκοους πετρας,
> Εις κυμα κωφον, εις ναπας δυσπλητιδας
> Βαζω, κενον ψαλλουσα μαστακος κροτον;

I thought them very apposite to what I had been about. In the last of the three, particularly, there is something of comic, that diverted me, at my expense, very much."[1]

Wakefield with whom he carried on this vigorous correspondence was in prison, serving a sentence of two years imposed on him for publishing a political pamphlet in reply to the Bishop of Llandaff. Wakefield's own sentence was cruelly severe, but the punishment of Cuthell for selling a few copies of the pamphlet was simply barbarous. Cuthell was the publisher of Wakefield's *Lucretius* and other classical works, and the printer of Wakefield's political pamphlet sent him a few copies which he kept for sale in ignorance of their contents. Fox did his best to obtain for Wakefield a mitigation of some of the discomforts of prison life, and also to secure some manuscripts for him that he wanted from private libraries. Wakefield died very soon after his release.

Fox abstained from Parliament during those years, but he made a few speeches. He spoke at a dinner of the Whig Club on May 1st 1798, and summed up in two sentences the Liberal attitude to the dangers and misfortunes of the nation. "A malign influence unfortunately prevails over the conduct of the national defence; but the inference is not that we should be slack, or remiss, or inactive in resisting the enemy. The true inference is that the Friends of Liberty should, with the spirit and zeal that belong to

[1] Letter to Wakefield, March 12, 1800. *Memorials and Correspondence*, vol. iv. p. 379.

their manly character, exert themselves in averting a foreign yoke: never forgetting that in happier and more favourable times, it will be equally their duty to use every effort to shake off the yoke of our English tyrants." At the same dinner, the Duke of Norfolk, who presided, gave the toast of "Our sovereign — the people," and for that little demonstration of Liberalism he was dismissed by the Crown from the Lord-Lieutenancy of the West Riding of Yorkshire. Fox had two strong motives for replying to this blow from the Government. The first was his natural objection to allowing a friend to suffer for opinions he held himself, and his second was that the growth of all the doctrines and habits of arbitrary power made the assertion of the Whig theory of the constitution a matter of imperative duty. He accordingly went to the Whig Club to make a speech in which he developed and completed the argument of the sovereignty of the people, showing that the House of Hanover had no right to the throne unless that argument was valid, and concluded his speech by proposing the toast that had cost Norfolk his Lord-Lieutenancy. Pitt replied by striking him off the Privy Council, refusing to adopt the advice of some of his friends who hoped to see Fox sent to the Tower.

Three things are conspicuous in Fox's speeches against Pitt's series of coercions. They are all illustrations of his political temperament. The first is the strong and steady light of a commonsense which pierced and penetrated all the rumours and phantoms of dark sedition that terrified the House of Commons. When the secret Committee with scared faces and trembling hands brought up the report by means of which the Government carried the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, Fox pointed out that the Committee were solemnly producing as proofs of conspiracies, documents and proclamations that had been published in all the papers. Half the manifestoes had been known to all the world for several months, and, as it turned out, Fox's prompt suspicions that the interpretations the Committee put upon

other documents which had hitherto been private were misleading and alarmist, proved to be correct in every detail. Pitt himself must have been a good deal shaken by all these false alarms, for he solemnly declared that there was more reason in the conspiracies of 1794 for suspending the Habeas Corpus Act than there had been in the rebellion of 1715, and the invasion of 1745.[1] Fox showed that if the Government were right in arguing that the country was united in love and attachment to the constitution, what they were doing was "to suspend one of the grandest principles of the constitution of England, until there should be found no man within the kingdom tinctured with discontent, or who cherished the desire of reform." The convention to which the alarmists referred with a haggard terror was merely a meeting of delegates, and it might be established for good or for bad purposes. At the worst such a convention was no cause for alarm. "If they meant by their intended convention to overawe the country at a moment of such unprecedented strength as the Government now possessed, he would say that they were fit for Bedlam, and Bedlam only. So perfectly and entirely was it possible for magistrates, in every part of the kingdom, to execute the laws, that he would venture to say, that if any man or men, at such a convention, committed any illegal act, he or they might be sent to prison, and tried for the offence as securely as if no convention existed." The truth is that discipline was never easier to maintain than it was during those years, and if there is any justification for coercion, it can surely only be the impossibility or the difficulty of securing obedience to the law. The meetings of the popular societies were most orderly, in spite of the efforts of Government spies to foment violence, and the only disturbances were created by Mr. Reeves' counter-organisation. It was probably partly due to the fact that Fox had taken more part in public meetings than any statesman of his rank, that he was much less apt than Pitt to class all the democratic

[1] *Parliamentary History*, 31. 570.

reformers in one large category of dangerous and treasonable persons. Pitt saw Jacobins everywhere, disguising their projects of treason under the cloak of constitutional reform. Fox saw that this view was unjust and ridiculous, unjust because it condemned, as insincere, men who had suffered for their opinions, such as Gerrald, to whom Fox paid a fine tribute in Parliament, and ridiculous because it assumed that great masses of men were all engaged in a stupendous and organised hypocrisy. If Pitt's view were correct, and it was the view of a man who had never been in contact with the new classes that were beginning to force their way into politics, and who was genuinely afraid of them, 30,000 men must have been assembled for the express purpose of concealing their real object.[1]

The second characteristic of Fox's speeches on these Bills is his profound sense of the sacredness and the moral value of freedom. Windham talked of "submitting to the inconveniences that may possibly arise from the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act,"[2] and this paltry view of a measure which placed all hostile or critical opinion at the mercy of the Government, illustrates as vividly as anything else the demoralisation that overtook the governing classes. Men like Windham were living during these years on the edge of their emotions, and in the giddy paroxysms of their terror they lost hold of all stable convictions about freedom or justice. Fox towered above that desolating anarchy of panic, because all his ideas of the English constitution were held by the inflexible grip of reverent conviction and habit. To the Government it seemed a small matter to stifle all discussion, and to imprison men by *lettres de cachet*; to Fox in whose eyes England stood for all the things that were most English in the world, that process was trampling out, under the heel of a panic that was largely selfishness, all the most precious qualities of English civilisation. It is significant that there was no orator who appealed as Fox did to the calendar of England's great

[1] Fox's *Speeches*, vol. vi.

[2] *Parliamentary History*, 30. 549.

men; to the memory of Burke in the days when his large sanity and charity of mind made him the champion of the colonists, to Savile, to Rockingham, and not least of all to Chatham, whose eccentricities Fox was the first to forget in his admiration for the massive personality that had humbled England's Bourbon enemies, and kept brisk, and strong, and robust the temper of independence and self-respect at home. To a man of Fox's temperament, the extinction of that great institution of free discussion, which had made such a lasting impression on Voltaire as the predominant virtue of public life in England, was a sombre and awful tragedy and the sacrifice of half the grandeur of his nation. He knew that the Terror was making a wilderness of the civilisation of his country, and even if he had been wrong instead of being right, as the event proved him to be right, in thinking there was no danger to warrant such a sacrifice, it was no common achievement in those days to remember what England owed to freedom. In that sable hour when all their old ideas of liberty flitted through men's minds as idle and trivial day-dreams, Fox still realised that there was something precious and divine in the spirit the Government was setting itself to destroy, and that sentiment gave passion and energy to his resistance, and to his defeat a very bitter sorrow. He saw opening up that social abyss between the governing classes and democracy which it took a generation of misery and fierce discord and the dreadful lesson of Peterloo to bridge over. Two passages from Fox's speeches are enough to show how thoroughly he had grasped the value of free discussion in England.

"The honourable and learned gentleman, in one part of his speech, and only in one, seemed to have a reference to the bill before the House. The honourable and learned gentleman admitted that the House was going to make a sacrifice by the measure before them; but had contended that what was retained of the rights of the people was still of higher value; the history of governments was certainly better than theory; in this, therefore, he agreed with the

honourable and learned gentleman. He did not, however, agree with him, that what they were to retain was superior to what they had to lose, if the bill were passed into a law. That which was to be taken away was the foundation of the building. It might, indeed, be said, that there were beautiful parts of the building still left. The same might be said of another building that was undermined: 'Here is a beautiful saloon, there is a fine drawing-room; here are elegant paintings, there elegant and superb furniture; here an extensive and well-chosen library.' But if the foundation was undermined, there could be nothing to rest upon, and the whole edifice must soon fall to the ground. Such would be the case with our constitution if the bill should pass into a law. Our government was valuable, because it was free. What, he begged gentlemen to ask themselves, were the fundamental parts of a free government? He knew there was a difference of opinion upon that subject. His own opinion was that freedom did not depend upon the executive government, nor upon the administration of justice, nor upon any one particular or distinct part, nor even upon forms so much as it did upon the general freedom of speech and of writing. With regard to freedom of speech, the bill before the House was a direct attack upon that freedom. No man dreaded the use of a universal proposition more than he did himself; he must nevertheless say, that speech ought to be completely free, without any restraint whatever, in any government pretending to be free. By being completely free, he did not mean that a person should not be liable to punishment for abusing that freedom, but he meant freedom in the first instance. The press was so at present, and he rejoiced it was so; what he meant was, that any man might write and print what he pleased, although he was liable to be punished, if he abused that freedom; this he called perfect freedom in the first instance. If this was necessary with regard to the press, it was still more so with regard to speech. An *imprimatur* had been talked of, and it would be dreadful enough; but a *dicatur* would be still more

horrible. No man had been daring enough to say, that the press should not be free: but the bill before them did not, indeed, punish a man for speaking, it prevented him from speaking. For his own part, he had never heard of any danger arising to a free state from the freedom of the press, or freedom of speech; so far from it, he was perfectly clear that a free state could not exist without both. The honourable and learned gentleman had said, would they not preserve the remainder by giving up this liberty? He admitted, that, by passing of the bill, the people would have lost a great deal. A great deal! (said Mr. Fox,) Aye, all that is worth preserving. For you will have lost the spirit, the fire, the freedom, the boldness, the energy of the British character, and with them its best virtue. I say, it is not the written law of the constitution of England, it is not the law that is to be found in books, that has constituted the true principle of freedom in any country, at any time. No! it is the energy, the boldness of a man's mind, which prompts him to speak, not in private, but in large and popular assemblies, that constitutes, that creates, in a state, the spirit of freedom. This is the principle which gives life to liberty: without it the human character is a stranger to freedom. If you suffer the liberty of speech to be wrested from you, you will then have lost the freedom, the energy, the boldness of the British character. It has been said, that the right honourable gentleman rose to his present eminence by the influence of popular favour, and that he is now kicking away the ladder by which he mounted to power. Whether such was the mode by which the right honourable gentleman attained his present situation I am a little inclined to question; but I can have no doubt that if this bill shall pass, England herself will have thrown away that ladder, by which she has risen to wealth, (but that is the last consideration,) to honour, to happiness, and to fame. Along with energy of thinking and liberty of speech, she will forfeit the comforts of her situation, and the dignity of her character, those blessings which they have secured to her at home, and the

rank by which she has been distinguished among the nations. These were the sources of her splendour, and the foundation of her greatness—

> . . . Sic fortis Etruria crevit
> Scilicit et rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma."[1]

"Do you think that you gain a proselyte where you silence a declaimer? No; you have only by preventing the declaration of grievances in a constitutional way forced men to more pernicious modes of coming at relief. In proportion as opinions are open they are innocent and harmless. Opinions become dangerous to a state only when persecution makes it necessary for the people to communicate their ideas under the bond of secrecy. Do you believe it possible that the calamity which now rages in Ireland would have come to its present height, if the people had been allowed to meet and divulge their grievances? Publicity makes it impossible for artifice to succeed, and designs of a hostile nature lose their danger by the certainty of exposure. But it is said that these bills will expire in a few years; that they will expire when we shall have peace and tranquillity restored to us. What a sentiment to inculcate! You tell the people, that when everything goes well, when they are happy and comfortable, then they may meet freely, to recognise their happiness, and pass eulogiums on their government; but that in a moment of war and calamity, of distrust and misconduct, it is not permitted them to meet together, because then, instead of eulogising, they might think proper to condemn ministers. What a mockery is this! What an insult to say that this is preserving to the people the right of petition! To tell them that they shall have a right to applaud, a right to rejoice, a right to meet when they are happy, but not a right to condemn, not a right to deplore their misfortunes, not a right to suggest a remedy! I hate these insidious modes of undermining and libelling the constitution of the

[1] Speech on Treason and Sedition Bills, Nov. 25, 1795. *Speeches*, vol. vi. pp. 44–46.

country. If you mean to say, that the mixed and balanced government of England is good only for holidays and sunshine, but that it is inapplicable to a day of distress and difficulty, say so. If you mean that freedom is not as conducive to order and strength as it is to happiness, say so; and I will enter the lists with you, and contend, that among all the other advantages arising from liberty, are the advantages of order and strength in a supereminent degree, and that too, in the moment when they are most wanted. Liberty is order. Liberty is strength. Good God, Sir, am I, on this day, to be called upon to illustrate the glorious and soothing doctrine? Look round the world and admire, as you must, the instructive spectacle! You will see that liberty not only is power and order, but that it is power and order predominant and invincible; that it derides all other sources of strength; that the heart of man has no impulse, and can have none that dares to stand in competition with it; and if, as Englishmen, we know how to respect its value, surely the present is the moment of all others, when we ought to secure its invigorating alliance. Whether we look at our relative situation with regard to foreign powers, with regard to the situation of the sister kingdom, and with regard to our own internal affairs, there never was a moment when national strength was so much demanded, and when it was so incumbent upon us to call forth and embody all the vigour of the nation, by rousing, animating, and embodying all the love of liberty that used to characterize the country, and which, I trust, is not yet totally extinct. Is this a moment to diminish our strength, by indisposing all that part of the nation whose hearts glow with ardour for their original rights, but who feel with indignation that they are trampled upon and overthrown? Is not this a moment when, in addition to every other emotion, freedom should be roused as an ally, a supplementary force, and a substitute for all the other weak and inefficient levies that have been suggested in its stead? Have we not been nearly reduced to a situation, when it was too perilous, perhaps, to take the

right course? May we not be again called upon for exertions that will demand the union of every hand and every heart in the kingdom? What might not this House do, if this House had the opinion of the country with it? Do not let us say, then, that we are to increase the force of the country by stifling opinion. It is only by promoting it, by giving facility to its expression, by meeting it with open hearts, by incorporating ourselves with the sense of the nation, that we can again revive that firm and compact power of British strength, that sprung out of British liberty."[1]

Another illustration of Fox's political temperament was his extreme suspicion of Pitt and Pitt's Parliamentary methods. It must be remembered that the Rockingham party into which he came in the seventies was born during the paralysis of the House of Commons. Throughout Fox's career there was no principle he held more stoutly than the principle of Parliamentary control of Ministers, and it was with the tenacity and vigilance of a political leader who believed that principle to be indispensable to sound and honest government that he pursued all Pitt's measures. It is possible that he carried to an extreme his personal suspicion of Pitt's motives, a suspicion that prevented him from ever supporting Pitt except in the maintenance and increase of the navy. But his suspicions were at any rate sincere as is evident from his private correspondence. He certainly regarded the alarmist policy of the Government from beginning to end as a deliberate attempt to excite fear, and to turn that fear to good account by consolidating the power of the Government. Pitt's motives were probably mixed; he was never so completely mastered by the panic as were Burke and Windham, and it is difficult to believe that a statesman who subordinated all his principles at one time or another to the maintenance of power, believing quite sincerely that it was more important that he should hold

[1] Speech on the Treason and Sedition Bills, May 23, 1797. *Speeches*, vol. vi. pp. 335–337.

office than that these principles should be carried into effect, was not alive to the obvious opportunity of silencing criticism. It must be remembered that the principle of Parliamentary control was all this while struggling into politics, and that the demand for a docile and uncritical House of Commons in 1794 or 1797 had no more justification in the eyes of men who thought the principle important than the same demand when it was addressed to the Opposition during the American War, at which time Pitt was as deaf and scornful to it as anyone else. To forget that this conflict was necessary during all these years is to misunderstand entirely the whole spirit of Fox's career.

There is one further comment to be made on the opposition to Pitt's domestic policy, and that is that it must be kept in mind in considering England's foreign policy. To Fox the career of oppression abroad was intimately connected with designs on freedom at home. That had been his view of the American War, and it was a view he shared with Chatham, who rejoiced that America had resisted and withdrew his son from the army rather than allow him to serve against the colonists, and with Richmond who said in 1775 that "the only thing that could restore commonsense to his country was feeling the dreadful consequences which must soon follow such diabolical measures." It is worth while to quote Fox's speech in 1777 in resisting the Bill for suspending the Habeas Corpus Act in America.

"Mr. Fox said that the bill served as a kind of key, or index to the design that ministers had been for some years manifestly forming, the objects of which they rendered visible from time to time, as opportunity served, as circumstances proved favourable, or as protection increased and power strengthened. It resembled, he said, the first scene in the fifth act of a play, when some important transaction or circumstance, affecting the chief personages in the drama, comes to be revealed, and points directly to the denouement. This plan had been long visible, and however covertly hid, or

artfully held back out of sight, was uniformly adopted, and steadily pursued: it was nothing less than robbing America of her franchises, as a previous step to the introduction of the same system of government into this country; and, in fine, of spreading arbitrary dominion over all the territories belonging to the British crown."[1]

It must be remembered again that if Pitt's language during the French war alternated between the language of a European crusade and that of British policy, he had taken into his Government, in Windham, the fiercest representative of the school that had excommunicated democracy and called for a counter-revolution. It argues a want of an elementary sense of proportion, and an elementary sense of justice to forget, in judging the harsh extremities of Fox's censures, and the bitter language in which to private friends he commented on the issues of a policy that he thought fatal to his country, that the enterprises to which he could wish no success were enterprises which he connected indissolubly with the collapse of liberty at home. He believed that if England conquered America, or dismembered France, or forced the French people back under masters they had disowned those victories would be followed by a sinister and shameful conquest of her own people. He fought the French war and domestic tyranny alike with a love of country that consumed all care for the "darling popularity" which he had once counted the chief prize of public life.[2]

[1] *Speeches*, vol. i. p. 67, Feb. 10, 1777.

[2] "As for myself," said Mr. Fox, "let gentlemen catechise me as much as they please; let them spread papers, stating me to be the enemy of my country; let them blacken me as much as they please; let them even be successful, if they can, in their endeavours to make me odious to my countrymen; still will I persist in doing my duty to the public, and never relinquish it but with my life. I am not vain enough to suppose, that any efforts of mine have contributed much to the spirit and the energy which has been manifested in this country; I should be proud to think they had; I should be glad to learn that any efforts of mine had contributed to awaken my countrymen to a sense of the value of their own freedom. A great orator, whose chief defect has frequently been stated to be vanity, has said, *Nobile jusjurandum juravi, ne quid omitterem ut Respublica denique salva sit.* That is far from being my opinion of myself: but ambitious I am to pre-

serve the liberties of my country. I have therefore opposed these bills; and I trust the spirit of the country will resent them, especially as they are avowedly only a part of what is intended for them by those ministers, who have brought on the present distresses of the country."—Speech on Treason and Sedition Bills, Dec. 3, 1795. *Speeches*, vol. vi. p. 74.

Cf. also Horner's opinion, "In the most formidable moments of the French military power my dread never was of its prevailing against us in this island by conquest, but of the inroads that our system of defence was making upon the constitutional forms of our parliamentary government, and upon the constitutional habits of the English commons."—Horner, *Correspondence*, vol. ii. p. 315, Feb. 27, 1816.

CHAPTER VI

FOX AND IRELAND

I

The rise of the national spirit in the seventies. Grattan's work. The Volunteer movement. The great triumph of 1782. Fox's attitude. His argument that no country was entitled to hold the sovereignty of another against its will. Proposal for commercial treaty declined by Grattan. The unfortunate agitation of 1782–83 over the reality of the concession of independence. Its results. The question settled by explicit Act of the British Parliament. The armed Convention of Volunteers. Fox firm against concession to men in arms. The Convention disperses.

"MY wish is that the whole people of Ireland should have the same principles, the same system, the same operation of government, and though it may be a subordinate consideration, that all classes should have an equal share of emolument; in other words I would have the whole Irish government regulated by Irish notions, and Irish prejudices; and I firmly believe, according to another Irish expression, the more she is under the Irish government, the more will she be bound to English interests."—Speech in the House of Commons, March 23, 1797, vol. vi. p. 318.

Ireland presented in the reign of George III. two great questions to Irishmen and Englishmen. Was it possible to establish a responsible and national government in Ireland, and was it possible to reconcile the creation of such a government with the maintenance of English interests? There were two great men, Grattan in Ireland, and Fox in England,

who answered that question in the affirmative. There were similarities between them. Grattan was three years older than Fox; they were close friends; from 1777 when they met at Lord Moira's they acted usually in concert; they differed on the French war but agreed on almost every other question in politics; they were both struck off the Privy Council, and both of them after a brilliantly successful beginning in politics spent the long remainder of their days in forlorn minorities.

When Grattan entered the Irish House of Commons in 1775 one important concession had already been wrung from England in the Octennial Bill, passed in 1768[1] in return for an augmentation of the Irish army. But the Parliamentary rights of Ireland were extremely imperfect.[2] Parliament could only legislate by submitting heads of Bills to the Irish Privy Council, which in turn transmitted them in the form of a Bill, if it did not choose to suppress them, to a Committee of the English Privy Council who altered it at its discretion and then returned the Bill to the Irish House in which the heads of the Bill had been drafted. The Irish Parliament had no power of amending this Bill; it could only accept or reject it. It is important to notice that it was at the hands of the English Privy Council that the first Irish proposal to mitigate the Penal Code perished in 1708. Whilst the Irish Parliament possessed only the power of suggesting legislation, the British Parliament claimed the right of binding Ireland by its acts, a right which it had used, without mercy, to destroy all the most important manufactures of Ireland. Subject to all the selfish prejudices of a Parliament in which she was unrepresented, Ireland had none of the securities of justice which protected the individual in England. There was no Habeas Corpus Act and no Irish Mutiny Act. The judges were removable at the pleasure of the Crown, and the right of supreme and final jurisdiction in Irish cases had been taken from the Irish House of Lords and transferred to that of

[1] The Parliament of George II. had sat for thirty-three years.

[2] Lecky, *Ireland*, ii. 52.

England. Most of the prizes of office in Church and state went to Englishmen, and the Irish Pension List was the most convenient and the least embarrassing of all the resources on which an English sovereign, or an English Minister could draw to oblige a mistress, or a foreign ambassador, or a political client. The Parliament was for the most part a Parliament of marionnettes, set in motion at one time by a few "undertakers," at another by direct agents of the Castle, whose corrupt services to England were paid out of the taxes of Ireland.

Besides these political disabilities under which the nation suffered, there was a long and grim catalogue of disabilities by which the majority of the nation was punished for its religion. The Penal Code remained on the statute-book in all its bloody ferocity, the charter of Protestant persecution, rivalling in adroit brutality the most infamous of the intolerances applied by a Church that had never affected to respect private judgment. Not a hovel could escape the penetrating vigilance of a cruelty that had ransacked in its ingenious energy the whole range of men's hopes and sufferings in order to make the religion of most Irishmen a daily martyrdom. "A machine of wise and elaborate contrivance," as Burke described the code, "and as well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment, and degradation of a people, and the debasement in them of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of men." Catholics were excluded from all public life, from almost all professions,[1] from the navy and army, and they could not even hold the position of watchman or gamekeeper. They could not buy land or hold leases for more than thirty-one years; the few Catholic landowners who remained had no freedom of bequest, and if the eldest son became a Protestant, the estate was settled on him, and his father became a life tenant. To convert a Protestant to Catholicism was a penal offence; a Catholic could not have his child taught by

[1] The notorious Lord Clare was the son of a Catholic who turned Protestant in order to become a barrister.

Catholics, or leave his children to the care of Catholics if he died when they were minors; he could not possess a horse worth more than five pounds; and except under particular conditions he could not live in Galway or Limerick. A Protestant who discovered that a Catholic had secretly purchased landed estate, or had so improved his farm that the profits exceeded one-third of the rent, could take possession of the estate or the farm. All the vast resources of avarice, meanness, insidious cruelty, and diabolical spite had been plundered in those centuries of Protestant rapine to accumulate that savage trophy, a trophy that stood between Ireland and a national civilisation.

The outlook for Irish nationalism was not as leaden and inclement as the mere recital of these facts would suggest. The Penal Laws were the creations of an intolerance which had largely subsided, and the fact that Ireland was still Catholic showed that however heavily the country paid for their existence by expatriation or the depression of her energies and occasional scandals and atrocities, the laws for the most part were only half-heartedly applied. The truth was that Ireland had begun to emerge from the devastations of conquest into a new phase, the gradual growth of a larger sentiment of corporate life. Cowed and down-trodden, the Catholic population was yet loyal, and a transformation like that which attached Anglicanism to the House of Brunswick had changed the temper of the proscribed Church in Ireland. All the leading Catholics presented an address to Lord Halifax in 1762, asking permission to enrol their people for the service of the Crown, and though the Government rejected the application, it supported a proposal to enrol seven Catholic regiments in the allied army of Portugal. "Formerly," wrote Irish Chancellor Bowes to a prominent English politician, "Protestant or Papist were the key-words; they are now court or country, referring still to constitutional grievances."[1] This new spirit of nationalism received a powerful impulse from the American

[1] Lecky, *History of Ireland*, ii. 59.

War. The year that Grattan entered Parliament the first blood was shed in the quarrel with the American colonists, and North had begun the war which had consequences for Ireland not much less momentous than its consequences to America.

Grattan saw that if Ireland was to become a nation again, there were two things to be accomplished. It was imperative that the Government of Ireland should be Irish, and that the system by which the majority of Irishmen were a proscribed population should be finally destroyed. The American War produced a great national movement in Ireland, and it reduced the English Government to a degree of reasonableness and moderation which no persuasion could have inspired. These two effects continued to make the five years from 1775 to 1782 a rapid and sensational series of triumphs for Grattan's cause; they armed him with the inspirations of Irish Unity and all the political embarrassments of the English Government. One immediate effect of this spirit was the Relief Act passed in the Irish Parliament in 1779, which enabled Catholics to take land on a 999 years' lease and to inherit land in the same way as Protestants, and abolished the odious practice of allowing the eldest son to secure the heritage of his Catholic father's estate by becoming a Protestant. Burke wrote to Pary, the Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, when the Act was passed, "You are now beginning to have a country," and the next few years showed how true was his prediction. In 1780 a small measure of Catholic relief in England produced the Gordon riots; in Ireland, where Protestant prejudice had been sharpened for centuries on all the rough edges of fear and political ὕβρις, this first instalment of toleration produced only one strong protest outside Parliament, a petition from the Corporation of Cork. Lord Charlemont, an incorruptible and stalwart Whig, who was unhappily opposed to Catholic emancipation, very rightly attributed to Grattan a great part of the change of the Protestant temper, but the movement of sentiment which followed during

the next few years was a spontaneous sense of national unity. The great volunteer organisation which arose in 1779 during the fears of a French invasion, when it was clear the Government could not defend Ireland, was the result of a common determination in which all religious discords disappeared. Catholics were not enrolled at first but they subscribed liberally to its expense,[1] and Grattan won a triumph that is historical at the great meeting of the delegates of 143 corps of Ulster volunteers on February 15, 1782, assembled in full uniform in the great church of Dungannon. On Grattan's motion this great representative body of the most Protestant province in Ireland resolved with only two dissentients that "we hold the right of private judgment in matters of religion to be equally sacred in others as in ourselves; that as men, and as Irishmen, as Christians and as Protestants, we rejoice in the relaxation of the Penal Laws against our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects, and that we conceive the measure to be fraught with the happiest consequences to the union and the prosperity of the inhabitants of Ireland." That event shows that during the struggle for independence the Protestants outside Parliament had caught something of Grattan's spirit of toleration, and that Grattan was more representative of the volunteers than Flood and Charlemont. The result was seen in the further instalment of relief in 1782 when two Bills were carried through the Irish Parliament repealing some of the barbarous enactments against Catholics, allowing them to keep horses worth more than £5, and to become schoolmasters and private tutors if they took an oath of allegiance and took no Protestant pupils. "The question," said Grattan, who wished to go further and give the Catholics political rights, "is not whether we shall show mercy to the Roman Catholics, but whether we shall mould the inhabitants of Ireland into a people; for so long as we exclude Catholics

[1] At the critical time of 1781 a Roman Catholic merchant of Cork offered to the Government, on behalf of himself and his friends, 12,000 guineas for defence.

from natural liberty and the common rights of men, we are not a people; we may triumph over them but other nations will triumph over us."

The events that were bridging over this ugly chasm in Irish life were giving Ireland a new authority and importance in her general relations to England. The volunteers were primarily a measure of defence against invasion; they rapidly became the most formidable of all the measures of remonstrance against misgovernment, and the withholding of Irish rights. Grattan, as a leader of a small party of independent men, whom the Castle could not hope to buy, was a great moral force in politics, but the armed deliberations of 50,000 volunteers who had saved their shores from invasion, gave to all his splendid oratory a new resonance and an imposing strength. The English Government represented the extreme school of supremacy, and the surrender of authority was no more congenial to North or to Hillsborough in Ireland than in America. But the force behind the demand was irresistible. In 1779 North decided that it would be dangerous to resist any longer the agitation in Ireland for free trade, an agitation in which the volunteers played a conspicuous part and in the course of which, in spite of all Grattan's efforts, there was an outbreak of violence in Dublin. Resolving to yield he resolved to yield handsomely, and his Bills in 1779 and 1780 destroyed the whole fabric of commercial restrictions by which Irish trade had been so cruelly disabled. The Acts prohibiting the Irish from exporting their woollen manufactures and their glass were repealed, and the trade of the colonies was thrown open to them. In 1780 the English Privy Council accepted the Bill of the Irish Parliament for relieving the Irish Dissenters from the Test Act and the following year it sanctioned the Habeas Corpus Bill which the national party had carried through the Irish Parliament.

These successes had been won by Grattan's party under a Government at Whitehall which was constitutionally hostile, and which used all the arts of corruption to oppose its pro-

gress. In 1782 the conditions changed. North's government disappeared and the Rockingham government that succeeded it contained the two English statesmen who were most friendly to the popular movement in Ireland, Burke, who never forgot that he was an Irishman, and Fox, who had formed an attachment with Grattan and admired warmly his general aim and his great gifts, whilst Rockingham himself was a close friend of Charlemont the leader of the volunteers. The circumstances under which the new Government took office were critical and delicate. The last letters written by Carlisle, who had as Viceroy since December 1780 shown a great deal more insight and judgment than his predecessor, laid stress on the overwhelming antagonism in Ireland to the doctrine of British supremacy. Grattan had moved an address in February 1782 declaring the independence of the Irish legislature, and though a motion for postponing the question had been carried, it was well known that he had the whole body of Irish opinion at his back. Grand juries in almost every county had passed resolutions asserting the right of Ireland to legislative independence, and the great meeting of the Ulster volunteers had resolved unanimously on 15th February that "a claim of any body of men other than the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland to make laws to bind this kingdom is unconstitutional, illegal, and a grievance." Grattan was to bring forward his motion again in April, and Carlisle wrote to Hillsborough towards the end of March, "I have in former letters observed to your lordship that my Government on every other point has the support of a most respectable and very large majority, and even resisted this particular question in several shapes in the course of the present session, but that under the universal eagerness which has taken place through the kingdom to have this claim decided, I cannot expect the friends of administration to sacrifice for ever their weight among their countrymen by a resistance which would possibly lead to serious consequences."

Grattan was to move his declaration on 16th April; the

new Government took office on 23rd of March; and on the first day of the meeting of the English Parliament, Eden the late Chief Secretary made a speech in the English House of Commons stating that it was no longer possible to resist the Irish declaration of rights, and giving notice of his intention to move a repeal of the obnoxious Declaratory Act. Eden's intervention was designed to embarrass the Government in revenge for their conduct in removing Carlisle from the Lord-Lieutenancy of the East Riding of Yorkshire, and restoring Carmarthen whom North had dismissed because he had supported a motion for an inquiry into expenditure. Fox replied to Eden very promptly and severely, pointing out that he had come over post-haste to give notice of a motion reopening claims of the Irish Parliament which in Office he had consistently resisted, and arguing that it was a good criterion of the government which Eden had pronounced so effective and capable that Grattan, Charlemont, Burgh, Flood, and Yelverton had been in opposition. He ended by laying down very emphatically his view of the question at issue between the two countries, and by stating that the Government intended to take Irish affairs into consideration at once. "Had his majesty's present ministers ever been advocates for nominal dignity, had they held out principles of coercion, had they either in regard to America, or to any other part of what was formerly the British dominions, avowed principles that savoured of severity or despotism, he should not at all wonder at their intentions being doubted; but as, on the contrary, they had uniformly avowed and acted upon doctrines of a directly opposite tendency, he thought them entitled to some degree of credit and confidence, and the more especially as he had so repeatedly and so expressly reprobated that sort of government, which rested upon deceiving the people in any instance whatever. He held all attempts to deceive and delude a country to be not more base in themselves, than weak, absurd, and impolitic, and so far was he from

thinking that Great Britain had a right to govern Ireland, if she did not chuse to be governed by us, that he maintained no country that ever had existed or did exist, had a right to hold the sovereignty of another, against the will and consent of that other."[1]

The state of Ireland made it difficult for a new Government to act or to parley with dignity, and Fox and Rockingham tried to persuade Grattan and Charlemont to postpone the imminent declaration, and give them time to deliberate. Their wish was eminently natural, for Portland and Fitzpatrick the new Viceroy and Chief Secretary only arrived in Dublin on April the 14th. But Irish sentiment, so often stemmed and turned aside, was now moving in a groundswell of elation and hope. Grattan refused, and on the 16th of April he made that imperishable speech in which he saluted Ireland as a free people, and admired the "heaven-directed steps by which she had proceeded until the whole faculty of the nation was braced up to the act of her own deliverance." The address passed unanimously; the volunteers pledged themselves to uphold the House of Commons in its demands, and all the credit and dignity of Ireland inside and outside of Parliament were involved in the recognition of Irish independence. Grattan knew the risks he was running, for if England had refused there would have been war and the final alienation of the Irish people from England, a contingency he always dreaded. He wrote earnestly to Fox saying that he felt it his duty to place before him his opinions because they "concurred with the settled sense of the Irish nation," and laying down definitely the sum of the Irish demand. It would of course have been unwarrantable for Fox to have pledged the Government to any definite policy, and he was very careful in his replies to observe all the restraints that were proper to a Cabinet Minister discussing subjects that were in the department of a colleague. But the correspondence, though Grattan professed only to write to him "as the first

[1] Fox's *Speeches*, vol. ii. pp. 56, 57.

man in England" was really a useful result of their mutual confidence, and Fox was making every effort to persuade Grattan to agree some day to accept office, a proposal Grattan so far accepted as to say he would, under some circumstances, be willing to "take any part in the Administration provided it was not emolumentary."

Fox himself would have preferred to make an arrangement giving Ireland legislative independence for internal affairs, and reserving to England a control of foreign matters. His private letters to Fitzpatrick make this clear. "I own I still adhere to my opinion, that giving way in everything, without any treaty or agreement which shall be binding upon both countries, can answer no end but that of obtaining quiet for a few months. You know how strongly some people here object to a Parliamentary Commission, and yet I see no other tolerable way out of the business. We who are for it should have been very much strengthened, if we had had the Duke of Portland's opinion for such a measure, and if it is not his opinion, we should have been glad to relinquish it and to adopt his ideas, if we knew them. As the matter now stands, I am very apprehensive of misunderstandings. The answer to the Address ought neither to please or displease any, otherwise than as the laying of the addresses before the English Parliament certainly seems to look to the repeal of English statutes. But when they are laid, you will probably expect us to take some step upon them; whereas we think, we ought to wait till something is done with you, or at least till we hear from you. My opinion is clear for giving them all that they ask, but for giving it them so as to secure us from further demands, and at the same time to have some clear understanding with respect to what we are to expect from Ireland, in return for the protection and assistance which she receives from those fleets which cost us such enormous sums, and her nothing."[1]

"I really begin to have hopes that this business will terminate better than I had expected; and that with a

[1] *Correspondence*, vol. i. pp. 411, 412.

concession of *internal* legislation as a preliminary, accompanied with a modification of Poynings' Law and of a temporary Mutiny Bill, we may be able to treat of other matters, so amicably, as to produce an arrangement that will preserve the connection between the two countries." [1]

But the crisis had left the Irish people in no humour to treat except on the basis of the full recognition of independence. It is evident from Fox's correspondence that he had made up his mind that the wishes of Ireland must be granted, but he hoped that the Irish Parliament itself might propose a negotiation on other matters, if its internal authority were acknowledged. This hope was falsified by events, and the Government resolved to concede the four demands of the Irish Parliament; to repeal the Declaratory Act of George I., to abandon the appellate jurisdiction of the English House of Lords, to consent to such a modification of Poynings' laws as would annihilate the exceptional powers of the Privy Council, and to limit the Mutiny Act. Fox's speech in announcing the policy of the Government was illustrative of the whole spirit of his Irish policy. He began by emphasising his distinction between internal and external legislation: "It was downright tyranny to make laws for the internal government of a people, who were not represented among those by whom such laws were made." External legislation was the province of the British legislature, and if that right had not been abused, it would never have been challenged. "The best and most effectual way to have kept it alive would have been, not to have made use of it." This authority had been employed against Ireland as an instrument of oppression, by establishing impolitic monopoly in trade, and the result was the distresses and injuries that had armed the volunteers. He was not yielding to force in repealing the obnoxious Act, but to the wishes of Ireland which had suffered under the oppressive use of that authority.

"For his part, he had rather see Ireland totally separated

[1] *Correspondence*, vol. i. pp. 417, 418.

from the crown of England than kept in obedience only by force. Unwilling subjects are little better than enemies; it would be better not to have subjects at all, than to have such as would be continually on the watch to seize the opportunity of making themselves free. If this country should attempt to coerce Ireland, and succeed in the attempt, the consequence would be, that, at the breaking out of every war with any foreign power, the first step must be to send troops over to secure Ireland, instead of calling upon her to give a willing support to the common cause."[1]

"Ireland had spoken out, and clearly and plainly stated what she wanted; he would be as open with her, and though he might perhaps have been better pleased, if the mode of asking had been different, still he would meet her upon her own terms, and give her everything she wanted, in the way which she herself seemed to wish for it. She therefore could have no reason to complain; the terms acceded to by England, were proposed by herself, and all her wishes would now be gratified in the way which she herself liked best. But as it was possible, that if nothing more was to be done, than what he had stated to be his intention, Ireland might perhaps think of fresh grievances, and rise yearly in her demands, it was fit and proper that something should be now done towards establishing on a firm and solid basis the future connection of the two kingdoms. But that was not to be proposed by him here in parliament; it would be the duty of the crown to look to that; the business might be first begun by his majesty's servants in Ireland; and if afterwards it should be necessary to enter into a treaty, commissioners might be sent from the British parliament, or from the crown, to enter upon it, and bring the negotiation to a happy issue, by giving mutual satisfaction to both countries, and establishing a treaty which should be sanctified by the most solemn forms of the constitutions of both countries.

"Notwithstanding this country was parting with what

[1] *Speeches*, vol. ii. p. 62.

she had hitherto held and exercised, still he could not look upon this day as a day of humiliation to her; she was giving up what it was just she should give up; and in so doing, she was offering a sacrifice to justice: fear, he declared, was out of the question. He said he entertained no gloomy thoughts with respect to Ireland: he had not a doubt but she would be satisfied with the manner in which England was about to comply with her demands; and that in affection, as well as in interest, they would be but one people. If any man entertained gloomy ideas, he desired him to look at the concluding paragraph of the Irish addresses, where he would find, that the Irish people and Parliament were filled with the most earnest desire to support England, to have the same enemy and the same friend, in a word, to stand or fall with England. He desired gentlemen to look forward to that happy period, when Ireland should experience the blessings that attend freedom of trade and constitution; when by the richness and fertility of her soil, the industry of her manufacturers, and the increase of her population, she should become a powerful country; then might England look for powerful assistance in seamen to man her fleets, and soldiers to fight her battles. England renouncing all right to legislate for Ireland, the latter would most cordially support the former as a friend whom she loved; if this country, on the other hand, was to assume the powers of making laws for Ireland, she must only make an enemy instead of a friend; for where there was not a community of interests, and a mutual regard for those interests, there the party whose interests were sacrificed became an enemy. The intestine divisions of Ireland were no more; the religious prejudices of the age were forgotten, and the Roman Catholics being restored to the rights of men and citizens, would become an accession of strength and wealth to the empire at large, instead of being a burthen to the land that bore them."[1]

The governing principle of Fox's conduct in making the

[1] *Speeches*, vol. ii. pp. 64, 65.

unqualified concession is quite clear and unmistakable. He believed that it was indispensable to England to win the confidence of the Irish people, and that if once that confidence were won Ireland would be loyally attached to the connection.[1] In this respect, as in almost all others, his views were identical with those of Grattan, in whose mind the wish to keep Ireland loyal to Great Britain was a constant preoccupation. "He was desirous above all things, next to the liberty of this country, not to accustom the Irish mind to an alien and suspicious habit with regard to Great Britain." The second of the two resolutions in which Fox laid down the policy of the Government in the House of Commons had recommended that "such measures should be taken as should be most conducive to the establishing, by mutual consent, the connection between this kingdom, and the kingdom of Ireland, upon a solid and permanent basis." Shelburne and Portland were both anxious to carry out some plan by which the general superintending power of England would be restored, but it is evident from Fox's letters not less than from his speeches that he was convinced that once the Irish demand for unqualified independence was proved to be inflexible, no other arrangement could be wisely made. The Irish patriot party were too jealous of their newly won rights even to entertain the notion of a commercial treaty, and Fitzpatrick was authorised to disavow in the Irish Parliament any intention of bringing forward further measures grounded on the second resolution in the British Parliament. Portland's secret letter to Shelburne a few days later shows that he still cherished the hope of re-establishing British supremacy in external matters, and Shelburne received the idea with alacrity. Portland soon found that nothing could be done with the Irish Parliament. His letter was written without Fitzpatrick's knowledge, but some rumours of his plan may have got abroad in Ireland.

[1] Fox's epigram in opposing the commercial propositions, "I would trust everything to Ireland's generosity but nothing to Ireland's prudence," if unhappy in that particular application summed up this feeling.

Fox himself was unequivocally opposed to any such attempt, and throughout the crisis Grattan's confidence in him never wavered. Pitt afterwards quoted Portland's despatch to Shelburne as a proof that the Rockingham Government did not regard their settlement as final, but Fox's letter to Fitzpatrick of February 19, 1799, reviewing the whole proceeding is a complete refutation of Pitt's argument.[1] Fox at any rate never shared any of Portland's designs, and Grattan's letter to Fitzpatrick, written in February 1800,[2] contains a passage which places on record the lasting impression of sincerity both Fox and Fitzpatrick made on him. "I perfectly recollect the conversation you state to have taken place in the House of Commons between you and Mr. Flood, and the very fair and honourable part which you took through the whole of that business; and however English Cabinets or English Secretaries have sometimes been disingenuous to Ireland, I feel a pleasing recollection even now, that there were two with whom I was connected, you and Mr. Fox, in whose open dealing our country and all her friends might repose entire confidence."

The instantaneous result of the great concession was most gratifying to Fox and to Grattan. The Irish Parliament promptly voted £100,000 to furnish 20,000 additional sailors for the British navy, and presented an address to the Lord-Lieutenant "requesting that a day of public thanksgiving may be appointed to return thanks to the Divine Providence for the many blessings of late bestowed on this kingdom, and particularly for that union, harmony, and cordial affection, happily subsisting between the two kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland, whose interests are inseparably the same." A few months later the Irish Parliament acceded to the request of the English Government, and authorised the King to withdraw from Ireland an additional force of 5000 men. The language of Parliament was the language of the volunteers. Grattan's great services were recognised

[1] *Memorials and Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 432.

[2] *Memoirs of Henry Grattan*, vol. ii. pp. 284–291.

by a gift of £50,000, and everywhere the concession was regarded as final and complete.

This general spirit of gratitude and rejoicing was unhappily disturbed before many months had passed by Flood's stratagems in Ireland, and one or two unfortunate accidents in England. Flood's share in the great national triumph of 1782 was rather jejune and arid. He had been in the Government during Grattan's brilliant beginnings in the House of Commons, and the popular supremacy had passed to the larger spirit and more catholic aspirations of his young rival, who had never known the silence or the eclipses of office. He had played a great part in the last few years, but it was Grattan who was always before the footlights. It is difficult to separate his bitter quarrel with Grattan from all suspicion of personal jealousy, and the agitation he excited in Ireland after the concession had been made by the English Government did untold mischief. During the discussion on the address Flood had described as superfluous or possibly dangerous the clause which stated "that there will no longer exist any constitutional question between the two nations that can disturb their material tranquillity." He did not vote against the clause, but two lawyers in the House maintained that the British Parliament in repealing the Declaratory Act which asserted the legislative or judicial power of Great Britain over Ireland did not annul the assumed right of the British Parliament to legislate for Ireland. Grattan combated this doctrine furiously, and with good reason. The credit of the Irish Parliament and the credit of his own party were at stake, for the Irish Parliament had said that repeal was sufficient, and Grattan had explicitly stated to Fox more than once in his letters that repeal was all that Ireland asked. Unfortunately various events happened in England to inflame the suspicions with which Flood had poisoned the hour of triumph. By the carelessness of a subordinate clerk, Ireland was included in the British Acts of Parliament; an Irish case was decided by Lord Mansfield because it had come up for appeal before

the late Act had passed; an obscure Peer proposed in the British House of Lords to introduce a Bill asserting the right of Parliament to control Irish trade, and with Rockingham's death there was a new Viceroy, and rumours of new legislation. The cumulative result was to excite a profound misgiving in Ireland, and Grattan, who knew how mischievous it was to encourage the idea in England that Ireland was never satisfied, found himself displaced by Flood in the popular confidence. The genial jubilations of Ireland were suddenly followed by an ague of malignant suspicion. Temple who succeeded Portland strongly recommended Shelburne to satisfy the demand for specific renunciation, and the whole matter was finally decided in the beginning of 1783 by a most explicit Act of Parliament. Fox, who was now out of office, supported that Act, but he repudiated indignantly the notion that his own Act was incomplete, or that the repudiation of British supremacy was not unequivocal and plain. He and Grattan were entirely of the same temper.

The whole controversy did great mischief in Ireland where a hurricane of suspicion and discontent was the worst weather for the new Parliament to start in. It was followed by a general spirit of dissatisfaction, which expressed itself in the ranks of the volunteers, and led to a further breach between Flood and Grattan. The general character of the volunteer organisation had by this time undergone a considerable change, and some of the popular leaders, such as Charlemont and Grattan, were not a little apprehensive of its pretensions to influence Parliament. It was now freely said that the Irish Parliament in accepting the 1782 settlement as final had betrayed the country, and that the volunteers, by taking up Flood's demand for an express renunciation, had saved Ireland. The volunteers showed no disposition to disband, and they began to assume the character of an armed public opinion outside Parliament. That Parliament was in urgent need of reform, and that it was hopelessly unrepresentative and inadequate was

apparent, and there was no more ardent champion of reform than Grattan. But the whole series of the proceedings during the autumn of 1783 were of the nature of a conflict between Parliament and the volunteers, and Flood after attacking Grattan's successful efforts to dissuade Parliament from any unfriendly behaviour to England, as in the controversy over the proposal to reduce the army, was working up a threatening acrimony outside. Flood himself was an infinitely less liberal-minded man than Grattan, for all his schemes of reform shut out the Catholics, and his fiery Irish passion never lost its exclusively Protestant colour. But during this agitation he was the militant reformer, whilst Grattan was determined to prevent disorder and maintain the dignity of Parliament, and there was no question which of the two policies would attract the popular support.

Fox was now in office again, in the Coalition Government, and his own counsel was clear. The volunteers arranged to hold a great convention in Dublin in November, when Parliament had assembled, and to frame a plan of reform, and to demand those rights without which the "forms of a free nation would be a curse." The supreme importance of the plan rested on the fact that the convention was a convention of armed men, and Fox, whilst he never suggested that the meeting should be forbidden, insisted very firmly that no Government could grant a reform demanded at the sword's point. He relied on Grattan's "integrity and love of his country" to prevent a military revolution, and he exhorted Northington, the Viceroy, to show firmness in rejecting all petitions from "Pretorian bands." With regard to the "volunteers and their delegates, I want words to express to you how *critical*, in the genuine sense of the word, I conceive the present moment to be. Unless they dissolve in a reasonable time, Government, and even the name of it, must be at an end; this I think will hardly be disputed. Now, it appears to me that upon the event of the present session of this Parliament, this question will

entirely depend. If they are treated as they ought to be, if you show *firmness*, and that firmness is seconded by the aristocracy and Parliament, I look to their dissolution as a certain, and not very distant event. If otherwise, I reckon their government, or rather their anarchy as firmly established, as such a thing is capable of being: but your Government certainly, as completely annihilated. If you ask me what I mean by firmness, I have no scruple in saying that I mean it in the strictest sense, and understand by it a determination not to be swayed in any the slightest degree by the Volunteers, nor even to attend to any petition that may come from them." The Convention met, but Charlemont who disliked the project wisely decided to become a delegate, and to use his influence to moderate its behaviour. The madcap Bishop of Derry had hoped to be elected President and had talked of bloodshed, but to his mortification the Convention chose Charlemont. A measure of reform was agreed upon. Flood proposed that he should at once proceed to Parliament and ask for leave to bring in a Bill embodying that measure, the Convention not to adjourn till the fate of the motion was known. This plan, disapproved of by Charlemont, was adopted; Flood made his motion in volunteer uniform with the result that Fox had hoped for. There was strong resentment against this form of pressure, and Yelverton's motion that the House should refuse to take into consideration a Bill that came from men with arms in their hands was carried by 157 to 77 votes. Grattan supported the proposal to consider the Bill on its merits, but he voted for a subsequent resolution that "it had become necessary to declare that the House would maintain its just rights and privileges against all encroachments whatever." Charlemont persuaded the volunteers to adjourn till the Monday following the debate, and when they met he was supported by Flood in his policy of moderation, and in spite of the Bishop of Derry, he persuaded the Convention to adjourn *sine die* after recording once again its belief in the urgent necessity of Parliamentary reform.

There are two comments to be made on this incident which was the last chapter in the picturesque history of the volunteer movement. The first comment suggested by these events is that they abundantly justify Fox's condemnation of repressive measures against civilian conventions afterwards. It is lamentable to think that it was with the dissolution of the volunteer Convention in his mind, a dissolution that the Government never hastened by threats or penalties, that Pitt allowed himself very readily to apply coercion to agitations that were immeasurably less formidable to public order. Secondly, it is perhaps to be regretted in view of the future of all Grattan's efforts to secure Parliamentary Reform afterwards, that Flood's irregular and dangerous proceeding did not succeed. That Fox and Grattan should heartily dislike this armed menace to the constitution, coming from men who argued that England had not treated Ireland fairly in Fox's Act and that all the honours paid to Grattan for the resounding triumph of 1782 were undeserved, was natural and proper, and both of them were thoroughly alive to the peril of allowing volunteers to dictate to Parliament in a country where the volunteers had all the authority they had won in the hour of the Government's collapse and danger, and where they seemed likely to develop into a standing army of discontent. But reform by any means would have been better than the sterile and disconsolate passages of history that led to the Union. Grattan, in the enthusiasm of a great victory and the expansive promise of a new national vigour, could scarcely predict that for fifteen years all his confident hopes of reform would break against the elaborate obstructions of a British policy from which Fox's spirit was conspicuously absent. A month after the Convention Fox was ejected from office, and when next he kissed hands as a Minister the Irish Parliament had disappeared.

CHAPTER VII

FOX AND IRELAND

II

The importance of the Election of 1784 to Ireland. The delicate situation created by the arrangements of 1782 illustrated in the Regency crisis. Pitt's great commercial scheme. Fox's acrimonious opposition. The scheme drops. The keynote to Pitt's Irish policy his dread of an independent Ireland. Hence his resistance to reform and his flagrant increase of corruption. Concessions to Catholics in 1792 and 1793 designed to avert more formidable danger of Parliamentary Reform. Pitt's treatment of the Catholic question before and after the Union shows that he subordinated everything to the necessity of arresting the moral independence of Ireland. Fox's policy the exact opposite. His ideal an Ireland governed by Irish opinion and liberated from the Protestant ascendancy. His attitude to the Fitzwilliam incident and the Union. Justified in his view that English opinion and not Irish opinion was the real bar to Catholic emancipation. Fox unlike many Whigs who were Whigs everywhere except in Ireland.

THERE was perhaps no part of the British Empire for which the election of 1784, and the career that election made or crippled was so important as the country which had just tasted all the exhilarations of defiance and triumph. The most illuminating fact to remember in considering the history of Grattan's Parliament is that almost throughout its life it was controlled by men who hated the principle of its existence or authority. The great English statesman, who kept a close grasp on it for fifteen years and finally extinguished it, was an enemy alike to the spirit of the concessions

of 1782, and to the spirit in which Grattan set himself to develop and improve the emancipated Parliament. The settlement of 1782 was not to the mind of any English Minister, and Fox himself, as we have seen, had been eager to arrange the difficulties between England and Ireland by conceding full internal control to Ireland, and reserving a certain supremacy in matters of commerce and foreign policy to Great Britain. In this as in many other things Fox had in view some solution of the kind to which statesmen of a later century have turned. But North's obedience to the Court had stripped England bare, and the Government that took office in 1782 had to choose between war with Ireland and the unreserved acknowledgment of her independence. Grattan would probably have been wiser to agree to enter at least into a commercial treaty in 1782, and such a treaty would have completed rather than have diminished the great achievement of that year. But he chose otherwise, and a situation was created which involved indisputably certain considerable risks and difficulties in the formal relations of the two countries.

These difficulties were illustrated in 1789 when the Irish Parliament and the English Parliament took different courses over the Regency; for the Irish Parliament inspired partly by a premature confidence in the Prince of Wales' professions of affection for Ireland, and partly by a wish to assert its independence, invited him to assume the full powers of the Crown. The King's recovery cut short any embarrassments that might have arisen, but the incident was an illustration of possible difficulty. Another difficulty was the question of commercial policy, and no critic of Pitt's Irish policy will ever grudge him the fullest and loudest praise for his bold attempt in 1785 to put an end to all risks of tariff wars, and to confer a great advantage on both countries by his series of Commercial Propositions. In their first form the Propositions were submitted to the Irish Parliament, and agreed to; on their introduction into the British Parliament they were vehemently attacked by Fox, Sheridan, North, and by Eden, who

was regarded as a great authority on questions of Irish trade. The protests from English manufacturers, who were as rigidly attached to their monopolies as were the landowners in the fight over the corn laws sixty years later, followed in long and angry array, and Pitt was obliged to make various concessions which increased his Propositions from eleven to twenty, and imposed restrictions on the Irish Parliament that Grattan and his friends regarded with a very jealous resentment. In their original form the Propositions had asked nothing more from Ireland than a conditional contribution to the navy, "whatever surplus the revenue produced above the sum of £656,000 in each year of peace wherein the annual revenue shall equal the annual expense, and in each year of war without regard to such equality, should be appropriated towards the support of the naval force of the Empire in such a manner as the Parliament of this kingdom shall direct." The precise condition attached to this contribution was arranged as a concession to Grattan who saw the great advantage of giving an English Government for the first time an interest in economy in Ireland. But the Propositions as they returned to Ireland imposed certain serious limits on Ireland's rights of external legislation, and at the same time they reduced the benefits to accrue to Ireland. Grattan turned against them, and Pitt's scheme perished amidst the bonfires of the delighted capital of Ireland. It was a great and enlightened measure, and it is not easy to acquit Fox and the other Whigs of something worse than an ignorance of political economy, in their opposition to it. Pitt had displaced Fox, as Grattan had displaced Flood in the popular estimate of the two nations, and in both cases a certain personal rancour obsessed, if it did not determine, the mind in which the rejected politician approached the scheme of a successful rival. The collapse of the plan was a great misfortune, but it is easy to exaggerate the significance of its failure. As a matter of fact, the Irish Parliament never interfered with British commerce, and the next overtures for a commercial treaty came from Grattan in 1794, and it

was Pitt who gave them a cold shoulder.[1] The failure of Pitt's attempt affected his own temper towards Ireland and the temper of other politicians, but its actual results were important only because of their psychological consequences, and it was not followed by any disturbance of British commercial arrangements by the Irish Parliament.

Pitt's objection to the situation created by the Act of 1782 went far beyond a consciousness of risks and embarrassments in commerce and the formal relations of the two countries. The entire scheme of Irish policy of which these great concessions were an integral part was repugnant to him. Grattan and Fox both looked forward to a nationalist government in Ireland; they pictured the dissolution of all the obstacles which religion or privilege opposed to that hope in the expanding temper of national pride, and they believed that a self-governing and self-respecting Ireland would be a cordial friend to Great Britain. For Pitt the prospect of the development of Irish patriotism had nothing but terror; the nationalism which Fox and Grattan wished to develop was in his eyes something to be destroyed, and the barriers they wished to overthrow were to him the tightly-drawn cordon of English interests, not to be broken down without putting the English connection to imminent hazard. It is this fundamental difference between his view and that of Fox which explains their Irish policies. Pitt never harboured any sectarian prejudices, he disliked corruption, and he did more than most men to check some of its worst forms in English politics. Yet all these things were subordinated to his supreme principle that the British connection depended upon arresting and checking the growth of a vigorous temper of patriotism in Ireland. His mind always loitered round this central idea of governing Ireland through her worst passions instead of letting her govern herself through her best passions, because he thought the alternatives were British supremacy or Irish independence. British influence rested in his judgment on a slippery margin of inequalities

[1] Lecky, *History of Ireland*, vol. iii. p. 229.

and ascendencies, whereas Fox believed that it could find no other foundation than Irish contentment and self-respect. It followed that resistance to all the better impulses in Irish politics belonged inevitably if reluctantly to the main principles of Pitt's policy, and that Grattan's chief obstacle, as a reformer, was the determination of a statesman, who was regarded in England as a sworn enemy of corruption, to maintain intact all the outworks of a system of government by largesses and organised bribery.

This becomes quite clear by considering how Pitt treated from 1784 to the Union all the main issues of Irish politics. Grattan's programme was largely the programme which the Rockingham Whigs had carried in England, with the addition of Parliamentary reform and Catholic relief. That programme conflicted with Pitt's ideas of controlling the Irish Parliament and of maintaining the supremacy of a group that had a direct and palpable interest in English rule. It was the result of this obsession in Pitt's mind that Grattan, the first Irishman of his time for whom the triumph of 1782 ought to have opened up a long and active career, was almost invariably in opposition, and that the concessions made to his demands were only made because they happened to suit rather than to contradict for the moment Pitt's governing idea. Grattan wanted to make the Irish Parliament the responsible organ of Irish opinion, and to do so it was necessary to eliminate corruption, to have as Ministers men who were ready to make Parliament morally independent of the Castle, as it was formally independent of England, to make Parliament really representative by a wise reform, and to abolish all the remaining bans and stigmas on the Catholic majority. Pitt wanted to keep the Irish Parliament in the leash and, quite consistently from that point of view, he was chiefly exercised about the best way of preserving and protecting the arts and methods of control. The men who were opposed to the national spirit of Ireland were the men to be supported; the machinery of clandestine corruption which Grattan wanted to destroy was the resource

by which the men who were interested in upholding British influence maintained themselves in power; the imperfections of the representation were indispensable to the control of Dublin Castle, and the religious divisions of Ireland were to be used skilfully as means to her management. It followed that during the long years that Pitt was Prime Minister the Irish Government was in the hands of men who not only resisted all retrenchment, but positively created pensions and offices in order to increase their influence.

Grattan described the system of Irish Government in 1792 as "a rank and vile and simple and absolute Government, rendered so by means that make every part of it vicious and abominable; practically and essentially the opposite of the British Constitution." "By this trade of Parliament," he said, "the King is absolute. His will is signified by both Houses of Parliament, who are now as much an instrument in his hand as a bayonet in the hands of a regiment. Suppose General Washington to ring his bell, and order his servants out of livery, to take their seats in Congress—you can apply the instance."[1] Fitzgibbon, who afterwards became Clare,[2] laid it down as an axiom that the only security which could exist for national concurrence was a permanent and commanding influence of the English executive in the councils of the day. He made no secret of the means by which this influence was to be obtained, for he openly boasted that half a million had been spent to secure an address to Lord Townshend, and that if necessary that sum would be spent again. In this spirit the Irish Government opposed all Grattan's Bills for limiting the number of pensions, for limiting the number of placemen in the House of Commons, for the disfranchisement of custom house and revenue officers, and of course all proposals for electoral

[1] Lecky, *History of Ireland*, vol. iii. p. 82.

[2] Fitzgibbon had supported Grattan in 1782, and it was the Coalition Government that made him Attorney-General. Fox distrusted him then, but Grattan approved the appointment. His Tory sympathies rapidly developed, and he broke with Grattan after 1785.

reform. During Pitt's Ministry in England the Irish Government was stubbornly resisting all the measures for purifying the Irish House of Commons which Pitt had supported in the British House of Commons, and Grattan was not refuted in 1789 when he accused the Government of creating new pensions to the amount of £16,000 a year between 1784 and 1789, of distributing many of those pensions in the House of Commons, and of creating a large number of sinecures and other salaries. That year the Irish pension list had risen to more than £100,000 a year, although the English pension list had been restricted by the Rockingham Government to £95,000. The sale of peerages was an open secret. Grattan's great speech in 1790 summed up the policy of the Irish Government.

"First contemplate your state, and then consider your danger. Above two-thirds of the returns to this House are private property—of those returns many actually this very moment sold to the Ministers; the number of placemen and pensioners sitting in this House equal to near one-half of the whole efficient body; the increase of that number within these last twenty years greater than all the counties in Ireland. The bills that do exist in England, and should have shocked you back to your original principles, and are necessary to purge the public weal, and to defend you not only against the Minister, but yourselves,—pension bill, place bill, and others, systematically resisted. The corruptions these laws would guard against, in a most extraordinary manner resorted to by the present Ministers of the Crown, and not only resorted to, but made the sole instrument of their Government. The laws which depart from the first principles of the Constitution, Excise, Riot Act, Police Bill, readily adopted, and obstinately maintained — the counteracting clauses—the responsibility of the Minister *a shadow*—the majesty of the people, like the Constitution, frittered out of your Court—some of the populace had gone too far—the Court availed itself of popular excesses to cry down constitutional principles; they began with a contempt of popu-

larity—they proceeded to a contempt of fame, and they now vibrate on the last string, a contempt of virtue; and yet these were checks not only in a constitutional public, but in certain connections; these generally supported the Minister, and occasionally checked his enormities.

"Against this refuge,—against the power of the Irish community in general, and this force in particular, is the present policy directed. It is a policy which would govern this country by salary distinct from power, or by power distinct from responsibility. No sturdy tribune of a constitutional public,—no check in an independent nobility."[1]

The tardy concessions made by the Government in 1793 are so far from disagreeing with this account of their general policy that they are a positive illustration of it. The Government had two motives for the reforms they introduced in that year which restricted the pension list and incapacitated placemen and pensioners from sitting in Parliament. First of all they were genuinely alarmed. The discontent of the country under the constant refusal of Parliamentary Reform, and the agitation of the United Irishmen and that of the Whig Club formed in 1790 by Grattan and the Ponsonbys frightened the Government into conceding the lesser reform as a means of averting the greater. Secondly they saw rather further than the patriotic party; they divined, as it proved only too truly, that the second concession might be a means of aggrandising rather than of weakening their influence. The majority of seats in the Irish Parliament were nomination boroughs, and the effect of compelling members who accepted office under the Crown to vacate their seats was really to give the Government facilities for changing the composition of Parliament. These facilities were used mercilessly in the great day of corruption which finally overthrew the Irish Parliament. Buckingham had grasped this point as early as 1789, and had recommended the adoption by the Government of Forbes' Place Bill as a means of strengthening

[1] Grattan, *Memoirs*, vol. iii. pp. 445, 446.

their own hands. Except for the admission of Catholics to the suffrage in 1793 which must be considered later, the Irish Government were uniformly hostile to Parliamentary reform in its larger shape. In 1784, in 1785, in 1793, in 1794, and in 1797 measures of Parliamentary reform were introduced in the House of Commons, and the Government on each occasion threw all their weight into the scale against them. The Bill which the Government threw out in 1794 proposed to add a third member to each of the thirty-two counties, and to the cities of Dublin and Cork, and to open the boroughs by extending the right of voting in them to all £10 freeholders in a specified section in the adjoining country. It was shown beyond any possibility of refutation that 124 of the 300 members of Parliament were nominated by 52 peers, and 64 by 36 commoners. It is clear from a private letter to Lord Hobart, Chief Secretary, from Parnell that the time when this Bill was rejected was a time of complete tranquillity. No wonder a Government that had the ordinary notions of English politicians about the right way of subordinating Ireland, refused to surrender a system which simplified so conveniently all the channels and avenues of corruption. As early as 1784 the question of Parliamentary Reform brought about an encounter between the reformers and Fitzgibbon, when the latter, by what Erskine and most lawyers considered a flagrant illegality, proceeded against the sheriff of the County of Dublin who had summoned a meeting to elect delegates to a convention, for contempt of Court. This convention, it must be remembered, was quite unlike the convention to which Fox had objected, because it was not a meeting of volunteers, but a convention of unarmed civilians.

The treatment of the Catholic question, again, illustrates very clearly the main lines of Pitt's policy. Pitt, as it is often said by his biographers, was quite liberal and broad-minded in his own views of Catholicism and religious disabilities. He had all an economist's dislike of restrictions which served no purpose, but he had none of

the passion for tolerance and freedom of opinion in itself which has influenced such men as Fox and John Stuart Mill. The only question the condition of the Catholics presented to his mind was whether the recognition or the refusal of the Catholic claims was the more likely to produce a docile Parliament, and to facilitate the management of Ireland. The Protestant ascendancy was in his opinion indispensable to British supremacy, and in his letter to Orde in 1784 he makes it quite clear that the only secret of government was the art of division. At that time Pitt was really anxious to admit some measure of Parliamentary Reform in Ireland, a wish he soon abandoned, and in writing to Orde he expressed his own feelings about the Catholics very explicitly. "On every account, too much pains cannot be taken to encourage the salutary jealousy of the designs of the Catholics which begins to show itself. That capital line of division will rend asunder the whole fabric which has been rearing. Finally, too, in my opinion, the Protestant interest must be the bond of union between Ireland and this country." [1]

"I am aware of the arguments against giving way in any degree. It is feared that we shall disgust those who are now the chief support of Government, by showing a disposition to admit what many of them are personally interested in opposing; that a reform from which the Catholics are excluded (which beyond a doubt they must be) will give them fresh ground for dissatisfaction, and that perhaps a reform in the representation would render Parliament too subservient to the prejudices or opinions of the Irish nation to acquiesce in an English Government." [2]

"The line to which my mind at present inclines (open to whatever new observations or arguments may be suggested to me) is to give Ireland an almost unlimited communication of commercial advantages, if we can receive in return some security that her strength and riches will be our benefit, and that she will contribute from time to

[1] Pitt to Orde, Sept. 25, 1784. Lord Ashbourne's *Pitt*, p. 94.
[2] Pitt to Orde, Sept. 19, 1784. Lord Ashbourne's *Pitt*, p. 88.

time in their increasing proportions to the common exigencies of the Empire; and having by holding out this, removed, I trust, every temptation to Ireland to consider her interests as separate from England, to be ready, while we discountenance wild and unconstitutional attempts, which strike at the root of all authority, to give real efficacy and popularity to the Government by acceding (if such a line can be found) to a prudent and temperate reform of Parliament, which may guard against, or gradually cure, *real* defects and mischiefs, may show a sufficient regard to the interests and even prejudices of individuals who are concerned, and may unite the Protestant interest in excluding the Catholics from any share in the representation or the government of the country."[1]

There is a melancholy interest in recollecting how the writer of this letter found himself drawn by the theory of maintaining British influence by means of direct interests further and further into iniquities, until it became in Mr. Lecky's language the firm resolution of the Government steadily and deliberately to increase the corruption of Parliament. In 1784 Pitt was anxious to foment jealousy of the Catholics in Ireland. Nine years later events had convinced the English Government that it would be wiser to concede than to resist the Catholic demand. They were terrified by the prospect of an alliance between the Catholics and the Republican Presbyterians of the North. Pitt and Dundas resolved that concession was "the most likely plan to preserve the security and tranquillity of a British and Protestant interest." Fitzgibbon and the Irish officials were still against all concessions, but the English Government who had trusted to the effect of religious differences to dissipate Irish agitations, found themselves in danger from a union of Catholics and Presbyterians in favour of Catholic relief and Parliamentary reform. The nationalist ideal in Ireland was to make the Irish Parliament independent, and

[1] Pitt to Rutland, October 7, 1784. Lecky, *History of Ireland*, vol. ii. pp. 413, 414.

supreme, and amenable to Irish opinion. The English Government thought, and thought rightly, in 1792 and 1793, that to withhold all concessions from the Catholics was enormously to strengthen an agitation which they had good reason, with the memory of 1782–1783, to regard with alarm. They modified their original plans in deference to the prejudices of the Irish Government, but during 1792 and 1793 they carried measures of relief which nothing short of genuine fear would have extorted.

In 1792 a Relief Bill was carried with the support of the Government. It enabled Catholics to be solicitors, and to practise at the Bar, although they could not become King's Counsel, or Judges; it removed restrictions on the number of apprentices permitted to Catholic trade, and repealed the laws forbidding barristers to marry Catholics, and solicitors to educate their children as Catholics. The concessions were a small instalment compared with the lavish scale on which relief was given the following year. In 1793 the Government gave Catholics the Parliamentary vote, allowed them to keep arms on certain conditions, and to hold all civil and military offices from which they were not specifically excluded. The same Bill described the privileges which were still withheld. Catholics could not sit in Parliament, or be Privy Councillors, King's Counsel, Sheriffs, or Generals of the Staff, and they were excluded from almost all Government and judicial positions. Three things must be noticed in regard to this measure. Although Pitt's Irish Ministers had represented to him that Protestant Ireland would never agree to emancipation, only one vote was given against the second reading of the Bill, and its clauses were carried by overwhelming majorities. The second is that the Government resisted and rejected an amendment to admit Catholics to Parliament. The third is that the instantaneous effect of the concession was the dissolution of the Catholic Convention.

There is nothing in the concessions to the Catholics in 1792 and 1793 which interrupts this general explanation of

Pitt's policy as a policy of maintaining English interests by Irish divisions. Those concessions were made to avert the greater calamity of a triumphant national movement, purifying Parliament, and giving to the demand for reform the same irresistible force which won for Parliament its formal independence. In conceding certain rights to the Catholics for which the Presbyterian reformers were clamouring the English Government was pursuing as inflexibly as ever its main object of resisting all reform that might weaken its control over Irish policy. In defending their concessions to Irish Ministers they made this quite clear. "The idea of our wishing to play what you call a Catholic game is really extravagant. We have thought only of what was the most likely plan to preserve the security and tranquillity of a British and Protestant interest."[1] Dundas, in another letter spoke of the apprehension of a union between the Catholics and Dissenters which would be "fatal to the present frame of Irish Government."[2] Pitt was constantly returning to the question of how best they could protect the present system. It was this alliance which seemed imminent between the disappointed and republican Presbyterians and the dissatisfied but anti-republican Catholics that determined the English Government to try to detach the Catholics from the demand for Parliamentary Reform, in which Catholics and Presbyterians had joined. To give the Catholics the vote was not running nearly such a risk as a Government would run in admitting Parliamentary Reform; for the secret of control was the art of managing Parliament, and it was the sovereign advantage of the present frame of Irish Government that the Parliament was in the hands of the Castle. There were one hundred and ninety placemen who voted automatically with the Government in a Parliament of three hundred.[3]

Pitt and Dundas in their private letters showed that they considered that Catholic relief would not undermine

[1] Pitt to Westmorland, 1792. Lecky, *History of Ireland*, vol. iii. p. 56.
[2] Lecky, *History of Ireland*, vol. iii. p. 58.
[3] *Ibid.*, vol. iii. p. 82.

the supremacy of the Castle. Only once had Parliament broken away, when the prospect of a Regency made the politicians who looked to the Castle for their salaries think it was time to make their accommodations with the prospective masters of patronage and sinecures. That escapade had been followed by the creation of sixteen new offices, and the constant and varied accumulation of new methods of corruption had enormously strengthened the Government's grasp of Parliament. That grasp was not weakened by conceding the Catholic vote, and the Government took care to give to their reforms nothing of the healing influence of a conciliatory temper which might have developed Irish patriotism. If their policy had been based on anything but a calculation of the best way to group and disperse their friends and enemies, they would not have kept in office the bitter opponents of the policy they had initiated. As it was, the moral value to Ireland of these reforms was very largely destroyed by the conduct of the Irish Ministers. In the King's speech there were smiling and cordial phrases of goodwill for the Catholics; in the mouth of Fitzgibbon, the chief agent of the policies and the conceptions of the Castle, there was nothing but the language of insolent and implacable malice. The English Government were giving the Catholics large and substantial concessions with one hand; with the other they kept in office as their Minister a politician who made it his deliberate object first of all to provoke a spirit hostile to all concessions, and secondly to poison all the charity and grace of the concessions, when they were made, by his own malignant invective. During 1792 Fitzgibbon exerted all his energies to secure public petitions and resolutions from grand juries against Catholic relief; newspapers were paid to circulate calumnies on the Catholics, and in the words of Richard Burke "Every man nearly in proportion to his connection with or dependence upon the Castle (and few of any other sort) expressed the most bitter, I may say, bloody animosities against the Catholics." The same Government that gave the Catholics

the vote kept in office the author of the most monstrous scheme for reviving the civil wars of Christianity, and fresh from his hideous triumphs they made him Earl of Clare.

For a few months only in all these years was Ireland governed on the principles of honest and responsible government, and in the sense of the Irish people. In 1794 Portland, Fitzwilliam, Spencer and Windham joined the Government, and Fitzwilliam became Viceroy of Ireland, an event the significance of which can be realised when it is stated that Fitzwilliam's Irish policy was not the policy of Pitt, but the policy of Fox. The details of Fitzwilliam's relation to Pitt, their misunderstandings, their charges, and their recriminations are not relevant to this chapter, except as they bear directly on Pitt's Irish policy. It is enough to say on Pitt's side that Fitzwilliam's friends in the Cabinet sustained Pitt's interpretation of the understanding on which Fitzwilliam was sent to Ireland,[1] and on Fitzwilliam's side that Grattan left a most positive statement recorded by his son of the words used by Pitt in describing his policy on the Irish question. "Not to bring it forward as a Government measure, but if Government were pressed to yield it." "At the meeting between Mr. Grattan and Mr. Pitt the latter was very plain and very civil in his manner. Mr. Grattan stated to him what his party desired and mentioned the measures that he thought Ireland required; the essential one was the Catholic question. Mr. Pitt upon this remarked 'Ireland has already got much.' Mr. Grattan did not tell him how she got it, and they did not enter into the details of the Catholic question, but Mr. Grattan put it down upon paper, in reply to which Mr. Pitt used these words, 'Not to bring it forward as a Government measure, but if Government were pressed to yield it.'"[2] Everything pointed to a change of system in the Irish Government when Fitzwilliam

[1] See Memorandum, printed in large part in Lord Ashbourne's *Pitt*, drawn up by Grenville, embodying the Cabinet's recollections of the oral arrangements with Fitzwilliam.

[2] *Memoirs of Henry Grattan*, vol. iv. p. 177.

became Viceroy. Fitzwilliam's own sentiments and his friendship with Grattan were well known; Grattan himself was invited over to England and consulted by Pitt, and Portland whose duplicity was unsuspected by the Irish said to Grattan, "I have taken office, and I have done so because I knew there was to be an entire change of system." Fitzwilliam came to Ireland at the beginning of 1795 and the hope of the new system dispersed even the gloom of the prospects of invasion. At last Ireland seemed within sight of the great object on which her truest sons had so long set their hearts. Grattan had recommended the removal of Fitzgibbon and other ministers who were pledged to corruption and intolerance; the Catholic demand was looked upon as already gained, and in a burst of that loyal generosity which Ireland exhibited whenever justice was done to her, the Irish Parliament raised the combined force of militia and regulars to a little more than forty thousand men, and carried on Grattan's motion a vote of £200,000 for the British Navy. All the evidence proves that Fitzwilliam was quite right in his report to the Government that there would be no serious opposition in Ireland to the grant of the Catholic demand; and that if it were conceded it would be safe and possible to raise a force of yeomanry cavalry, mainly Catholic, for the defence of Ireland.

Fitzwilliam's régime opened amidst general rejoicings, and the Protestant Corporation of Londonderry presented an address expressing a wish to see all Ireland united in one interest. Fitzwilliam acted promptly in the spirit of his mission. He did not remove Clare, but he removed some of the minor ministers who were conspicuously associated with Clare's policy, and had by means of nepotism and corruption almost incorporated themselves as a permanent part of Irish Government. Unhappily for both countries this temper of hope was in a few weeks to disappear in what has been called the east wind of English prejudice which has blown so many a message of discord to Ireland. The English Cabinet began to urge strongly the arguments against

Catholic emancipation which would suggest themselves to men whose policy was the policy already outlined in this chapter. Portland argued that it was not in accordance with commonsense and with human nature to suppose that if the Catholics were admitted to Parliament they would not use all their influence to overthrow the oligarchical monopolies in the boroughs in which the right of election was vested in not more than twelve electors. "I want to preserve the Protestant establishment in Church and State, and am willing and desirous to give the Catholics every right and every benefit which good subjects are entitled to, but I wish not to attempt it until I can be sure that the present establishment in Church and State is unquestionably secured, and that the participation to which I would admit the Catholics would be as little likely to be called in question." Fitzwilliam and the Government at home laid stress on different clauses in the former's instructions. Fitzwilliam understood that he was not to bring forward the Catholic question, but that if the demand for it was overwhelming he was not to oppose it; the Government at home understood his instructions to mean that he was to do his utmost to prevent its discussion. Fitzwilliam found the temper of the country running very strongly for emancipation. On January 15 he told the Government that he would accede to the demand unless he received peremptory instructions to the contrary. The Government gave no such instructions and allowed the Irish Parliament to meet, and Fitzwilliam understood that he was not to oppose the demand. He put himself in communication with Grattan, who was to present the Catholic petition, and Grattan agreed to postpone it till February 16, in order that the English Government should have the opportunity of limiting the concession if they thought proper. On February 18 the English Government censured Fitzwilliam, and on February 23 they recalled him.[1]

So perished Grattan's hope of an honest and national

[1] The main point at issue was the dismissal of Beresford.

government in Ireland. The east wind had done more than scatter Fitzwilliam's promises; it had driven the Catholic expectations overseas. But the Government's work was not done. They were not content with throwing all their influence into the scale against Grattan's Bill for admitting Catholics to Parliament. They deliberately set themselves to fill the rôle, which Clare had filled for some years, and to work up all the rancours and animosities of religion for political ends. The Red Indian savagery of Clare's Protestantism became the accepted and recognised type of the Government's policy, and the secret instructions given to Fitzwilliam's successor, Camden, deputed to him the august and imperial mission of exciting a religious war in Ireland. During the debate on Grattan's Bill, which the Government defeated by 155 votes to 84, the Government did not attempt to deny that Protestant opinion in Ireland was in favour of emancipation, or that they were doing their best to inflame religious hatreds. The fostering of a salutary jealousy of the Catholics which had been Pitt's policy for governing Ireland in 1784 was once again eleven years later the English expedient for preserving the Protestant and British interest, and the public efforts of Clare whose furious energies had been spent in this business of religious arson were duly marked by promotion in the peerage. In the summer of 1785, the most bitter of the intriguers against Fitzwilliam, the most venomous of the antagonists of Catholic relief, the most unscrupulous of the opponents of Parliamentary reform, and the most outspoken of the enemies of Irish freedom was made a Viscount by the Government that had promised Grattan, through the perjured mouth of Portland, that the bad old system had been finally abandoned. The United Irishmen had thrown off every vestige of religious prejudice to create a common patriotism. The British Government had no policy but a grindstone on which to sharpen the prejudices and hatreds which patriotism had dulled and blunted.

The bitter sequel is well known. All further demands for

reform and for Catholic emancipation were sternly refused, though the demand for Catholic emancipation was powerfully supported by a Protestant Bishop and General Loftus, and though Lord Moira stated that there was not a gentleman in Ireland who did not anxiously wish that the Catholics should be admitted to a full and unreserved participation of every right that was enjoyed by their fellow-subjects of the Established Church. Portland in a letter to Camden in March 1797 distinctly stated that the English Cabinet were opposed to any further concession to the Catholics, and that they would be guided entirely in this matter by the friends and supporters of the Protestant interest and the present Establishment, a formal phrase to describe Lord Clare. Some English Ministers were evidently alive to the dreadful risk they were running, and the vehement attacks on the Catholics were varied by friendly overtures in the matter of education. But the only answer to the demand for reform were proclamations of Martial Law and Coercion Bills, and by 1798 the Government were reaping in the great Rebellion the harvest they had sown, when they had scattered broadcast hopelessness and bitter feuds. The Rebellion was the effect of many causes. Some of the leaders had from the first been separatists, and their inspirations came not from English misrule but from the ideas of the Revolution. The scale of the Rebellion was the direct and immediate result of rancid hopes, crestfallen aspirations, and a patriotism taught to despair of justice from England. Its miserable story of atrocities, savagery on both sides, and the revival of a form of torture is no part of this chapter, and it is only necessary to remark that Clare who had driven Fitzwilliam out of Ireland in 1795 drove Abercromby[1] out of Ireland in 1798, because as Commander-in-Chief he had issued a rebuke to his troops, and sternly denounced a barbarous cruelty.

[1] It is interesting to notice that the same impression was made on another famous General as that made on Sir Ralph Abercromby. Sir John Moore was in Ireland in 1798 and said to Grattan, "If I were an Irishman, I should be a rebel."—*Life of Grattan*, vol. iv. p. 393.

The Union, in its methods and its principles, was the logical climax of the policy Pitt had pursued in Ireland. In every phase it had been his consistent aim to keep the control of Irish policy in the hands of the English Government, and in his wish to check the development of a strong and national Parliament in Dublin, he had shown no mercy to his own reputation or to the public morality of Irish politics. Pitt bore Ireland no ill-will; to the bristling problems of Irish commerce he brought the most enlightened mind of his day, and in considering his long career of resistance to reform, and his final destruction of freedom, the courage and the statesmanship of his proposals for Free Trade must never be forgotten. But the prospect of a vigorous nationalism made him tremble for the English connection, and he held that no method of averting that danger was unlawful. The Act of Union was the final stage in this policy, and the prodigal bribery which carried it was merely a dramatic and concentrated application on a grand scale of the familiar methods of Dublin Castle. The scale was munificent and unique, and history cannot match the mighty pageant of corruption, intimidation, and perfidy which marked the fifth Act of Grattan's Parliament. The patriots fought sternly to the last, and their leader, abandoning his forlorn retreat, returned to Parliament with crippled health, and covered with the wounds of calumny and ingratitude, to illuminate, by one last effort of his splendid genius, the closing hours of the Parliament which seventeen years before had borrowed from his triumphs a new vitality and an unconquered hope. Too weak to stand, he sat in the faded uniform of the volunteers, itself a sad allegory of the faded expectations that once had sparkled before that resolute army of Ireland's sons. That uniform reminded men in the hour of the degradation of Parliament, that only a few years ago the regeneration of that Parliament seemed as certain as the morning's sunrise. It reminded them that Irishmen who now looked in each other's faces across the smoke of civil war and the bloody mists of torture and

rebellion, had only a few years back stood side by side in a bracing comradeship, and forgotten in the name of Irishmen their centuries of hatred. Franklin signed the treaty with France which made America independent, in the coat he wore when the British House of Commons rejected his appeal for the colonists. Grattan made his last fight for his doomed and dying Parliament in the uniform that had gleamed with the splendour of Ireland's day of liberation.

The first effort of the Unionists failed, and the glittering house-tops of Dublin proclaimed in 1799 that patriotism had conquered.[1] But the English Government never relaxed its efforts. No form of bribery was forgotten. The Protestants were told that their establishment could only be saved by Union. The Catholics were told that the English Cabinet was in favour of Catholic emancipation with the Union, and against it without a Union. Every minister or official who preferred his country to Pitt's bribes was dismissed; and plans were discussed for increasing by manipulation the patronage which rewarded apostacy. The whole system and mechanism of administration in every corner of Ireland was directed to one supreme purpose; the elimination of every official who opposed the Union. A million and a quarter were spent in buying out the patrons of the boroughs; twenty-two peers were created; the whole spirit of reverence for the law was destroyed by making the bench the reward of every parasite who would take Castlereagh's secret service money to write on the side of the Union. By 1800 the Government had succeeded in their object, and the wall of Irish corruption had been built high enough to withstand the tide of Irish patriotism. The constitution of Ireland was destroyed by a foreign power just as certainly as was the constitution of Poland. Everyone remembers Cornwallis's exclamations of moral horror in the midst of this odious world of the bribers and the bribed, but Pitt's composure never deserted him, and in January 1799 the very man who

[1] The Union Act was rejected in 1799 by 109 to 104. In 1800 Castlereagh's resolution in favour of union was carried by 160 to 117.

was creating this fearful commerce in perfidy and office declared in the House of Commons that there would be no Union without the full and free consent of both countries.[1] By corruption Pitt had first imprisoned, and then poisoned, and had now destroyed the Irish Parliament. The final transaction Mr. Lecky has summed up in one terrible sentence, "Scarcely any element or aggravation of political immorality was wanting, and the term honour if it be applied to such men as Castlereagh and Pitt ceases to have any real meaning in Politics."[2]

For several years before the Union, Pitt had been meditating the destruction of the Irish Parliament as the only means of averting the danger of the growth of a Parliament morally, and not only formally independent. In his speeches on the Union he laid stress on the danger of conflict of opinion, and he made it clear that this was his governing notion. His reply to Grey's demand for an appeal to the Irish people is instructive. 1800, Apr. 22: "They said last year when the Parliament was against the Union 'reject it': they tell us this night when we know the Parliament have voted the Union 'appeal to the people.' I never can consent to such doctrine. There may be occasions but they will ever be few, when an appeal to the people is the just mode of proceeding on important subjects. The present is not a fit moment to appeal to the people of Ireland when, if we did so, the whole economy of our legislative system, the customary proceedings in cases which involve the rights and liberties of the people, the jurisprudence of the country would be thrown into confusion, and all this at a moment when we are about to effect that which the Parliament of Great Britain has declared essential to the peace of Ireland, and to the safety of the Empire."

That Pitt was opposed to Catholic emancipation without

[1] *Parliamentary History*, vol. xxxiv. p. 329. Lord Downshire was removed from the Privy Council for joining in a letter to Castlereagh urging that a petition should be presented declaring the real sense of the freeholders.

[2] *Leaders of Irish Opinion*, p. 182.

the Union, because he thought it would produce a new distribution of political forces in Ireland is clear from the instructions given to Castlereagh, and also from his speech in 1805. In 1799 Canning hinted that if the Union were not carried, it might be necessary to revive the old Penal code against the Catholics.[1] Pitt's own spirit was well illustrated by his remark to Parnell, in 1794, when Parnell was rejoicing at the union of the Irish Catholics with the Protestants, "Very true, Sir, but the question is, whose will they be?"[2]

Pitt's conduct showed how complete was this obsession in his mind. He gave no express promise to the Catholics, but he allowed the Catholics to be given the impression that the Cabinet would strongly support the emancipation if the Union were carried. He made no attempt to break down the King's prejudice of which he knew before the Union, and though he resigned when the King refused to agree to emancipation, he offered spontaneously within three weeks, to abandon the question altogether. In 1805 he made a strong speech against it, and argued that it would be fatal to emancipate the Catholics unless there was a general concurrence of opinion in their favour. There were two other important Catholic questions besides that of the disqualification for office; the commutation of tithe, and the provision for the Catholic clergy, and though Pitt had given some attention to them, he never lifted a finger to deal with them. It is impossible to suppose that a Minister of Pitt's extraordinary capacity could have been so callous to a great question in which his honour was intimately involved, if it had not been that his main policy was to destroy the Irish Parliament

[1] Lecky, *History of Ireland*, vol. v. p. 243.

[2] Cf. Pitt's *Speeches*, vol. iv. (1805) p. 101. "But, sir, deeply as I felt that satisfaction (the 1st Catholic relief bill) I also felt that in no possible case, previous to the Union could the privilege now demanded be given consistently with a due regard to the protestant interest in Ireland, to the internal tranquillity of that kingdom, the frame and structure of our constitution, and the probability of the permanent connexion of Ireland with the country."

and that everything else seemed of quite subordinate importance.

Pitt's sentiments on Irish politics were predominant amongst English statesmen, but they were fundamentally repugnant to Fox's temperament. All Fox's sympathies were with Grattan. Fox had abandoned with regret the policy of reserving for England a controlling voice over Ireland's foreign affairs, but he had never wished to check or thwart the free play of Irish opinion, in the Irish Parliament, on Irish affairs. He believed with Burke that once Ireland had a Parliament responsible to Irish opinion, all the lesser motives of faction and sectarian bigotry would disappear in a generous patriotism, and that if Ireland were her own mistress, she would be a loyal friend to Great Britain. The few months he was in office he relied on Grattan and the independent members, instead of building up a corrupt interest to protect English influence in the Irish Parliament. It is particularly interesting to notice the welcome Fox gave in 1782 to the idea of a Cabinet Council in Ireland, and to contrast with it Portland's horror of the same idea in 1795.[1]

The situation created by the events of 1782 made it almost impossible for an English statesman out of office to help Ireland. Formally, Irish affairs were outside the range of English public opinion, and to appeal to English public opinion against the Irish administration was to infringe the new compact with Ireland. Accordingly, for several years the contest was limited to Ireland, and it was under the form of a purely Irish conflict that the English Government arrayed its forces against Grattan. But the extraordinary scale of the bribery which followed the Regency dispute, and the Government's determined resistance to reform, decided Grattan and his friends to adopt more vigorous measures. The Whig Club was formed in Dublin to act as a centre of opposition, and a few years later Grattan,

[1] *Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 392. For Portland, see Lecky, *Ireland*, vol. iii. p. 330.

who had hitherto been very jealous of English intervention, encouraged Fox to raise Irish questions at Westminster. The recall of Fitzwilliam gave Fox an opportunity of discussing Irish affairs without any impropriety, and on May 19, 1795, he made a speech on that subject in which he laid down his views very clearly on Irish policy.[1]

The subject of the debate was a motion by Mr. Jekyll, "That an humble address be presented to his majesty, that he will be graciously pleased to direct that there be laid before this House such part of the correspondence between his majesty's ministers and Earl Fitzwilliam, late Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, as relates to the motives and grounds of his lordship's recal from the government of the said kingdom, during a session, in which the two Houses of Parliament had voted their confidence in him, and their approbation of his conduct, and had granted supplies for the general exigencies of the state, with a munificence unparalleled in the annals of that country."

[1] Cf. *Memorials and Correspondence*, vol. iii. pp. 100–101. "In a postscript to the last letter I wrote you, I told you a report of the Ministry here having disavowed Fitzwilliam; I did not then believe it, but it is turned out to be true, to a greater extent even than the report. He is to come home immediately, and states himself publicly to have been betrayed and deserted, not only by Pitt, but by the Duke of Portland. The business will I hope be made public soon in all its parts. At present it is very unintelligible, but I feel myself quite sure that Fitzwilliam will turn out to be as much in the right in all its points, as he is clearly so, in my judgment, with respect to the measures about which the difference between him and the Ministry is said to be the widest. I am told they gave out that the Catholic Bill is the real cause of his recall and that the question of Beresford Attorney-General, etc. is comparatively of no consequence. Now as to the Catholic Bill, it is not only right in principle, but after all that was given to the Catholics two years ago, it seems little short of madness to dispute (and at such a time as this) about the very little which remains to be given them. To suppose it possible that now that they are electors they will long submit to be ineligible to Parliament, appears to me to be absurd beyond measure, but commonsense seems to be totally lost out of the councils of this devoted country. In Ireland there is, as you may suppose, the greatest agitation; addresses from all parts marking respect and attachment to Fitzwilliam and his system, and implying of course the contrary to his successor, whoever he may be, and to the old system which he is to revive. I think this business has made great impression here, but whether it will have any effect God knows."

"Some persons might, perhaps, object to this motion, as the very words of it conveyed an idea, that it was dangerous to suffer any inquiry whatever to take place, as it stated circumstances, which went to infer that Ireland was in danger. The conduct of Earl Fitzwilliam was certainly very dangerous. But to whom was it dangerous? To the people of Ireland? By no means. It was dangerous only to the few individuals whose plan it was to govern Ireland by corruption: it was dangerous to those who held the interest and the sentiments of the people of that country in contempt, and therefore the cause of the removal of the noble earl upon that principle was easily perceived. The noble earl was, he believed, the only person who had the good fortune to obtain the applause of all the catholics and dissenters of Ireland; the only person who, since the accession of the house of Brunswick, had been able to unite all parties in that kingdom; and that, perhaps, to his majesty's present advisers, was a sufficient reason for his recal. Here Mr. Fox entered into a short history of facts with regard to the administration of Earl Fitzwilliam in Ireland; as also of the applications which were made to the throne by delegates from that country on behalf of the catholics, and maintained the right which the House of Commons of Great Britain had to institute inquiries into public matters which related to the interests of both. He was of opinion, that what had been allowed to the catholics in that country and in this, so far as it went, was highly proper; but that while there was any distinction made between them and the protestants with regard to political rights, they would still continue to have claims upon the justice of the legislature. His opinion indeed was well known to those who had done him the honour to attend to him; it was, that at all times, in all countries, and upon all occasions, there should be no distinctions in political rights, on account of religious opinions."[1]

"The next point to be considered, was the opinion which the mass of the people of a country entertained of the

[1] *Speeches*, vol. v. pp. 460, 461.

government under which they lived. He knew there were some who affected to despise that idea; but they were weak, shallow, miserable politicians. He knew that Ireland was in that respect in a very dangerous condition. It was essential to the welfare of a country that the common people should have a veneration for its laws. This was by no means the case in Ireland; and why? Because the law was there regarded as an instrument of oppression, and as having been made upon a principle of pitiful monopoly, and not for the general protection, welfare, and happiness of the mass of the people. It was too common there for the lower class of the people to resist the execution of the laws. Theft itself was not regarded by them with the same abhorrence as with us. Indeed, if we would have the mass of mankind regard our laws with veneration, we must make them feel the benefits of them; shew them that they are equal, and alike administered to all without distinction. It was this principle which made the laws of England so much the object of our admiration; it was this which made the people parties, as it were, in the execution of the laws; for when anyone infringed them, a prosecution against him was generally a popular measure. What he said with regard to laws, was also applicable to religion. He would have religious toleration as equal as the laws of England, and that all men should be estimated in society by their morals and not by the mode of religious worship. To root out prejudices altogether was not a thing to be accomplished at once; but it was a thing to be attempted, and every step towards it would be an advantage to the country. Such was the plan of Earl Fitzwilliam, which, instead of being aided, as it ought, was thwarted by the measures of our ministers. They had renewed the old plan of corruption, which had made the government of that country odious; this was too well authenticated to be doubted: it had been stated publicly in the House of Commons there, by a gentleman whose talents were highly eminent, and for whom, notwithstanding some little differences upon political sub-

jects, he had a high esteem, (he meant Mr. Grattan); that gentleman had stated that peerages in Ireland, instead of being a matter of honour, were an article of sale: that they were purchased from the corruption of seats in the House of Commons. He had heard much of the influence of the crown in this country. He believed it to be as great as it was ever stated to be. But in Ireland corruption had been publicly avowed and acted upon. Such a government must certainly be in a very decrepid state, and therefore any plan for the relief of the people was highly necessary. What, then, were we to think of ministers, who held out an encouragement at one time for such a plan, and afterwards recalled a lord-lieutenant for attempting to carry it into execution?"[1]

Fox's next return to Irish affairs was made in 1797. That year opened with all the omens of the dreadful struggle which preceded the Union. Both Fox and Grattan looked with despair on the policy of severities which the Irish Government initiated in March when they issued a proclamation virtually placing all Ulster under martial law. Grattan made a great protest in the Irish House of Commons, and he urged Fox to make a similar protest at Westminster. Fox was evidently sensible of all the objections that would be urged by Pitt to the discussion of Irish matters in the English Parliament, and he was very careful in his long and important speech to make the grounds of his intervention clear. It was his chief argument that the continual action of the English Cabinet, and its notorious corruption in Ireland had defeated the object of the great concessions of 1782. "An opinion prevails in Ireland, that whatever may have been the intention with which that measure was adopted, it has not produced a free and independent legislature, but that the advantages which the form of a free constitution seemed to promise, have been counteracted by the influence of the executive government and of the British cabinet."[2]

"It is even matter of notoriety, too, that a regular system

[1] *Speeches*, vol. v. pp. 464–466. [2] *Ibid.* vol. vi. p. 308.

was then devised for enslaving Ireland. A person of high consideration was known to say, that half a million of money had been expended to quell an opposition in Ireland, and that as much more must be expended to bring the legislature of that country to a proper temper. . . . 'You have granted us,' said the people, 'an independent legislature, independent certainly of your parliament, but dependent upon your executive government.' The concession, therefore, they viewed not as a blessing, but as a mockery and an insult."[1]

Fox went on to show how complete was the dependence of the Irish Parliament on the English Cabinet; it was everywhere known, when Fitzwilliam went to Dublin, that Catholic emancipation would be carried by the Irish Parliament: the Government then recalled Fitzwilliam, and defeated Catholic emancipation. "What was this but the most insulting display of the dependence of the Irish legislature?" This fact alone justified the criticism of what was really the conduct of the English Cabinet, whose influence had been used to sow dissension in Ireland, and "even the concessions which were extended to the catholics, were conducted upon a plan which seemed studiously intended by government to damp the joy of their success." The country was by this time confronted with the dreadful prospect of a war with Ireland, and what ought to be the policy? It ought to be the reverse of that Pitt had followed. "Before I proceed, I must here beg leave pointedly to express my abhorrence of the maxim *divide et impera*, and especially that by such a truly diabolical maxim, the government of Ireland should be regulated; on the contrary, I am convinced, that in order to render Ireland happy in herself, and useful in her connection with this country, every idea of ruling by division ought to be relinquished, and that the object of government should be to effect a complete union of all ranks of men."[2]

The Catholics had a right to all the privileges possessed

[1] *Speeches*, vol. vi. pp. 308, 309. [2] *Ibid.* vol. vi. p. 310.

by the Protestants. Catholics and Protestants alike suffered under the inadequacy of Parliament, and the people of Ireland had a real grievance against the English Cabinet. "In fact, we now are precisely at the point in which we stood in 1774 with America, and the question is, Whether we are to attempt to retain Ireland by force, instead of endeavouring to gain her by concessions, and to conciliate her by conferring on her the substantial blessings of a free constitution?"[1] After describing the severities practised in Ireland, Fox proceeded to describe his own policy. "But it may be said, what is to be done? My general principle is to restore peace on principles of peace, and to make concessions on principles of concession. I wish members to read that celebrated speech of Mr. Burke on the subject of such concessions. Let them read that beautiful display of eloquence, and at the same time of sound reasoning, and they will find in it all those principles which it is my wish to have adopted. There is another expression of that gentleman's, I believe, in his letter to the people of Bristol. In that letter he says, that 'that is a free government which the people who live under it conceive to be so.' Apply this to Ireland; make it such a government as the people shall conceive to be a free one."[2]

"I know of no way of governing mankind but by conciliating them; and according to the forcible way which the Irish have of expressing their meaning, 'I know of no mode of governing the people, but by letting them have their own way.' And what shall we lose by it? If Ireland is governed by conceding to all her ways and wishes, will she be less useful to Great Britain? What is she now? Little more than a diversion for the enemy."[3]

Fox's plan of secession from Parliament is to be regretted

[1] *Speeches*, vol. vi. p. 314. [2] *Ibid.* vol. vi. p. 316.

[3] *Ibid.*, vol. vi. p. 317. This speech was made on March 23, 1797. In May 1797 Cornwallis refused the Viceroyalty and Commandership-in-Chief because the Government would not agree to Catholic emancipation. The meeting of the Whig Club in Dublin thanked Fox. See *Grattan Memoirs*, vol. iv. p. 276.

on many grounds; his refusal to abandon it to oppose the Union in Parliament is not only to be regretted, but to be condemned. No Englishman possessed so much of the confidence of the independent Irishmen, no Englishman was saturated more thoroughly with the sympathy and respect for nationality which was so conspicuously wanting in the English treatment of Ireland, no Englishman owed to his reputation as certainly as Fox owed it, a direct and immediate protest against the destruction of the Parliament of 1782. Fox had lost none of his affection for Ireland, and to show his regard for Grattan, who was struck off the Privy Council on a false charge of conspiracy, concocted by a Government spy in 1798, he went to the Whig Club to propose his health, a mark of sympathy Grattan very much appreciated amidst all the persecutions he was suffering.[1] But the fatal fatigue and despair of those years of his life kept him inactive at St. Anne's Hill whilst Grey and Sheridan fought the Union in Parliament. Fox made no secret of his views, and he busied himself in fortifying Lord Holland with arguments against the Union, a form of vicarious protest which was an indifferent substitute for his own vehement indignation. He spoke against the Union at the Whig Club in May 1800, and the grounds of his objections are clearly stated there and in his letters to Grattan and Holland.

"I own I think, according to the plan with which you have set out, that you ought to attend the Union, nor do I feel much any of your objections, I mean to attendance, for in all those to the Union I agree with you entirely. If it were only for the state of representation in their House of Commons, I should object to it, but when you add the state of the country it is the most monstrous proposition that ever was made. What has given rise to the report of my being for it I cannot guess, as exclusive of temporary objections I never had the least liking to the measure, though I confess I have less attended to the

[1] Portland wanted to prosecute Grattan.

arguments *pro* and *con* than perhaps I otherwise should have done, from a full conviction that it was completely impossible. You know, I dare say, that my general principle in politics is very much against the *one* and *indivisible*, and if I were to allow myself a leaning to any extreme it would be to that of Federalism. Pray therefore, whenever you hear my opinion mentioned, declare for me my decided disapprobation, not that I would have my wish to have this known a reason for your attendance, however, if otherwise you wish to stay away."[1]

What reason is there, it may be asked, for supposing that Fox and Grattan were right in thinking it was possible to develop a national government in Ireland which would be neither inadequate for Ireland nor hazardous for England? Three facts must be remembered in considering that question. One is that the sentiment of nationality in Ireland was strong and vivid enough during the years of Grattan's Parliament to lull the conflicts of religion, and that the Irish Parliament would have conceded to the Catholics the right to vote and sit in Parliament, if the influence of the Government had not been exerted against them. All the evidence shows that Fitzwilliam judged correctly when he said that Ireland wanted Catholic emancipation, and that Grattan's proud boast in moving the Roman Catholic Bill, that the people of Ireland stood acquitted, was no fraudulent claim. "The Protestants of Ireland are willing; vast numbers of them have petitioned. The great cities are willing; the great mercantile interests are willing. The cabinet of England is the bar to the freedom of the Catholics, and the dispute is no longer a question between the Protestant and Catholic, but between the British Minister and the Irish nation."[2] During the years between the granting of the Irish Parliament and the recall of Fitzwilliam, Ireland made a remarkable advance in prosperity. There

[1] To Lord Holland, *Memorials and Correspondence*, vol. iii. pp. 150, 151. Cf. also *Grattan's Memoirs*, vol. v. p. 196 and vol. iv. p. 435.

[2] *Speeches*, vol. iii. p. 191.

has never been a time in Irish history when the tones of religious discord were so subdued and muffled in Irish politics. The Presbyterians of Ulster were friendly to the Catholics, and Grattan presented a Catholic petition against that part of the Maynooth College scheme which restricted the college to Catholics. "One fact," says Mr. Lecky, "is as certain as anything in Irish history—that if the Catholic question was not settled in 1795 rather than in 1829, it is the English Government and the English Government alone that was responsible for the delay."

The second fact is that all the evidence shows that there was no serious thought of rebellion amongst the Catholics in Ireland until after the recall of Fitzwilliam. This is clear from the report of the Committee of the Irish House of Commons, and from the evidence at the trials.[1] The whole genius of Catholicism, it must be remembered, was hostile to the Revolution, and it needed all the provocations of disappointment to estrange the Catholics into an alliance with Republicanism. Until the recall of Fitzwilliam the Revolutionary spirit was limited to the Presbyterians. As for the other discontents of Ireland, it must be remembered that the long resistance of the Government to all reform had had the very worst effects on the popular temper, and that if the south wind blew all the Revolutionary ideas into Ireland, the east wind had long been blowing ideas that were little likely to attach Ireland to English rule. There is nothing to show that if the Irish Parliament had been reformed there would have been such disaffection as to be a real danger to the connection. With reform steadily resisted, corruption steadily increased, the extinction of the buoyant hopes of Fitzwilliam's rule, and the scandalous neglect of the defence of Ireland, rebellion became inevitable. Grattan's policy of destroying corruption, promoting reform, and redressing the grievance of the tithes, the most onerous of the material grievances of the poor, never had a trial; but at

[1] See Memoir on *History of United Irishmen* by O'Connor Macnevin and Emmet.

least he could show that Ireland had never received a kindness from England without showing a responsive loyalty.

Was Fox unreasonable when he argued that English opinion would listen less wisely than Irish opinion to the wants of Ireland? The first chapter of Irish history after the Union gives the answer. In 1795 Ireland was prepared for Catholic emancipation. In 1805 Pitt himself urged as a chief argument against it the overwhelming hostility of English opinion.[1] Two men so unlike in some respects as George III. and the Duke of Richmond were Unionists precisely because they believed that the Union was the most effectual way of defeating Catholic emancipation, and their anticipations were only too literally fulfilled. Pitt argued in 1805 that the mass of opinion in all classes was against emancipation, and it must be remembered that if Dr. Price's toleration represented the temper of many Dissenters, Wesley's approval of the ferocious Penal Code was shared by the great majority of the Evangelical party, who inherited his narrow intolerance as well as his splendid devotion. So strong was this pressure of hostile sentiment that Fox himself was powerless to do anything for the Catholics when he came into office, though he promised to support any motion that was made on their behalf, and take the probable consequence of a breakdown of the Government.[2]

The truth is that the Union handed over the political control of Ireland to a public opinion which had neither sympathy nor knowledge. For a century a people in whom the love of the soil is passionate has been governed by a people from whose nature that strong and deep emotion

[1] *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. iv. p. 1020.

[2] An ambassador has left on record a conversation in which Fox said that he had promised the King, when he took office, not to raise the Catholic question. If this is accurate Fox is to be blamed. Lord Rosebery compares this promise with Pitt's conduct, but (1) between the time of Pitt's promise and that of Fox's alleged promise there occurred the division of 1805; (2) Fox did not undertake to oppose Catholic emancipation, on the contrary he promised Mr. Ryan to support any motion that was introduced. All Fox's moral influence was thrown on the side of emancipation; Pitt actually inflamed English opposition.

was finally hurried and whirled away in the excitement, and bewildering changes, and sudden appetites of the Industrial Revolution; a people supremely Catholic by a people rigidly Protestant; a people that reverences its tragedies, and memories, and the dust of its lost battles as if they were precious and divine, by a people that is not careful to distinguish between sensibility and an idle and vacant sentimentalism. The distresses and wants of Ireland have sounded strangely in the ears of a nation that lived in a different universe of cares and faiths and passions, and the hopes and lamentations the Irish sea tosses wearily from shore to shore are vain and wistful voices in an unknown tongue.

Fox's own Irish policy never had a trial. His hands were tied in 1782 by the exhaustion of England and the breathless precipitancy of Grattan, or he would certainly have attempted to give Ireland internal freedom without the risks and inconveniences of an absolute surrender. He wished the grant of full autonomy and responsible self-government to Ireland to be combined with a treaty for regulating the commercial relations of the two countries and Ireland's contribution to the fleet. That scheme was impracticable in the peculiar conditions under which Fox took office in 1782, and he was wise enough to know, after North's escapade, the danger of delaying concessions until the storm had burst, and reform was the trembling answer to the thunderbolt. The recollection of his wishes in 1782 is the severest reproach to his opposition three years later to Pitt's Propositions. His policy never had a trial, for Ireland never had responsible government; the development from the conditions left her by conquest to the conditions which could satisfy a national spirit was arrested, and Parliament, formally independent, was never out of the power of the English Ministry. If Fox had been Prime Minister instead of Pitt the Irish Parliament would have escaped that stagnant chapter which preceded and allowed its dissolution. Those Englishmen who wished well to

the best impulses in Irish politics had no place in the administration of the scheme of 1782.

It was a complaint of Irishmen that many ministers who were good Whigs in England were very indifferent Whigs in Ireland. Fox never joined that company of truants. Nowhere in all his speeches does his redoubtable liberalism ring more clear than in his passionate hatred of the spirit that shrank from the better mind of Ireland and condemned his country to all the weary cycles of intrigue, hypocrisy, and the hollow formulas of an unloved rule. The notion of ascendancy was for him the poison of politics, whether the subject people was Protestant or Catholic, the colonists or the conquered populations of the Empire. His Ireland was not the Ireland of the Anglo-Irish, not the Ireland of Charlemont and Flood, an Ireland governed by an austere and democratic Protestantism, still less the Ireland of Clare or Duigenan, an Ireland scourged by a mænad Protestantism and held tight in a corrupt supremacy. He looked further than Grattan, for Grattan always wished to preserve the Protestant establishment, and it is evident from Fox's language that he did not think that establishment lasting. His eye was much more alert than Pitt's for all the depravities of the system of ascendancy; he knew the price a nation pays in self-respect and integrity for a government that is in a state of permanent conspiracy against the national will; he knew the peril of allowing an habitual contempt for law and justice to grow and harden in the popular mind. "Why," he asked in 1795, "is the law not respected in Ireland? Because it is regarded as an instrument of oppression, and as having been made upon a principle of pitiful monopoly, and not for the general protection, welfare, and happiness of the Irish people." "Is that miserable monopolising minority," he asked in 1797, "to be put in the balance with the preservation of the Empire, and the happiness of a whole people?" "The Protestant ascendancy," he said in 1805, "has been compared to a garrison in Ireland. It is not in our power to add to the strength of that garrison,

but I would convert the besiegers themselves into the garrison." Fox failed, for between his sovereign remedies and the misery of Ireland, there thronged the whole multitude of doubts and prejudices, the dim-eyed hesitations of charitable politicians, the inexorable rapacity of a predominant religion, and the superstitions that bound the King to the hearts of the least tolerant of his subjects in an iron embrace. Almost alone of all the ministers who busied themselves with Ireland Fox always loved and feared the spirit of freedom, and that temper distinguished him from a long line of statesmen to whom England owes solid and substantial reform, and Ireland nothing but those eternal memories of wrong that are the solemn sacrament of trampled nations.

CHAPTER VIII

COLONIES AND DEPENDENCIES

The quarrel with America. Its causes. The trade difficulty. Disputes come to a head in 1774, the year of Fox's dismissal from office. Fox not a Free Trader, but he argued like Adam Smith that America would be agricultural. His strong opinion that a conquered America would be worse than separation. Close connection between that struggle and domestic struggle. Fox's view of the Quebec Bill in 1791. His criticism justified. The problem in India. Fox's Bill. Pitt's Bill. The impeachment of Warren Hastings. The slave trade. The development of public opinion. The apologies for the trade, the feelings of the colonies. Pitt's early enthusiasm and later vacillation. Fox's decisive Resolution in 1806.

WHEN Fox came into politics the triumphant genius of Chatham, and the prowess of Clive and Wolfe had made the question of the future relations of England to her colonies and possessions the main question of her external policy. It was a question that lay at the very root of public life, and on the way it was answered depended more than the future of the colonies and possessions themselves. The quarrel between England and America was only another phase of the quarrel between the Court and popular freedom, and the great public issues involved in the methods and principles of the government of India raised in a particularly momentous form the whole question of arbitrary or responsible administration.

Were England's colonies to be subdued to her will, and were her conquests to be administered by private and irresponsible despots, and to be held arbitrarily? Was the

temper of the country to be numb and quite indifferent to the conduct of the rulers and the fate of the ruled? Those were the questions English politicians had to face. It was no accident of faction that ranged Chatham and the Rockinghams on one side, and the King's party on the other in a controversy that crept into every nook and cranny of the political life of the country, and threw its shadow across the whole field of its public energies.

The steps which led up to the American War it is unnecessary to describe or to examine intimately here. The whole story is well known even if its lesson is not always well remembered by the descendants of the men who broke up the Empire. In America untrustworthy agents, proconsuls out of sympathy with the dominant ideas of the stern and uncongenial community where they held the King's authority, colonists not always conciliatory or reasonable; in England ministries fearful of surrendering any margin of their rights, making concessions at the moment when they could do no good, rather than when they could prevent some harm, and habitually misunderstanding the temper and the strength of the forces they were provoking; a king in whom the love of country was silenced by the passion for binding resolute men to his will, and a people tenacious and obstinate in enforcing its supremacy against mutiny and defiance; these were the *dramatis personæ* in a trilogy that represented as tragically as any masterpiece on the Greek stage the ancient dispensation of insolent prosperity, and signal punishment. Sir George Trevelyan has described in one of the most powerful pages of his *History of the American Revolution* the deep-lying causes that led ultimately to the separation of the thirteen colonies from the mother country. The colonies themselves were communities of men who had grown hardy and rugged in the rough school of adversity and struggle; they had been engaged in a mortal combat with savage man and with savage nature; they lived in a moral atmosphere that was arctic to all the elegant fopperies of long-established

social hierarchies, and their minds moved within the horizons of a sombre and morose religion. To these communities we sent rulers fresh from the world of luxury and frivolous enjoyment, into which the sudden opulence that followed the rapid acquisitions of empire had converted fashionable London. The communities and the men sent to govern them were of the same blood; they spoke the same tongue, and acknowledged the same king, but the Atlantic still rolled between them and they inhabited separate continents of custom and idea. These men cared nothing for the things the colonists cherished: their simplicity they despised; they sneered at their bleak and harsh theology, and one of them published a proclamation against hypocrisy. But they held of sovereign importance all those forms and rituals of obedient loyalty, that are neither attractive nor august to white men living close to nature and the harder warfare for existence. Their despatches, the opinions of rulers pursued by hallucinations of personal affront, and possessed by the notion that they were dealing with a people easy to overawe and dangerous to humour, were the charts by which the government at home steered their course over an unknown and threatening sea. Once and again they hesitated and took their soundings, and tacked and reefed a sail, but their final resolve to change their helm came too late, for they were already on the rocks.

Almost every public man in England had a past in the quarrel with America. The Rockinghams had repealed the Stamp Act in 1766, but they had also carried the Declaratory Act asserting the authority of England over the colonies in legislation and taxation. Chatham was strongly opposed to that Declaratory Act, and his stout sympathies with America provoked some of his most splendid challenges to the Court and the governing classes; but it was a Government of which he was a member, though at the time a disabled member, that passed the famous Act of 1767 for taxing American imports. Nor was this con-

dition of things surprising. The question at issue raised the whole problem of the relations of the mother country to the colonies, and that problem was complex and novel. The Court party thought it could be solved by asserting and exercising authority for the sake of exercising it; the Rockingham party was prepared to assert it, but thought it important not to exercise it; Chatham wished to exercise it to the full in commercial legislation, but to deny it outright in internal taxation. How far these vexed problems of commercial regulation and colonial contribution could have been ultimately solved in any other manner than by separation, it is difficult to say confidently, for the solution of the first difficulty was an economic truth that was as yet only the private possession of a few philosophers; and the second question is still unanswered.

As long as the old theories which Free Trade dislodged occupied the public mind, the colonies were necessarily regarded as protected markets for the produce of the mother country, and to allow them to develop trade of their own was inevitably regarded as training up a deadly rival to British commerce. In such a climate of thought it is difficult to say offhand that any arrangement other than separation would have been lasting, and it is easy to see that an atmosphere of speculation about rights and abstract claims was charged with all the elements of revolution. Again it must not be forgotten that there was much to irritate the English temper in the behaviour of the colonists, who were far more anxious to stand by their liberties than to make concession easy to the mother country, and that in English eyes they were not only mutinous but ungrateful for the army that had delivered them from the danger of invasion. The end of the French war had left a delicate situation, and the events of the next ten years, awkward interferences, maladroit pretensions, controversies rough in their manner on both sides had made it highly critical. What is called, by an obvious misuse of terms, our Colonial Empire, has grown and stands to-day upon two great

discoveries; the economic principle of Free Trade, the principle which implies that English trade gains instead of loses by the development of trade in other countries, and the political principle that the value of the colonies to the mother country depends absolutely on their enjoyment of internal freedom. The one principle was in its cradle, and no one would have struggled harder to stifle it than Chatham, who disliked Burke's Free Trade ideas and wished for a minute control of American trade; and the other the nation learnt after a bitter lesson when it had buried the British flag in thirteen colonies.

Fox had less of a past than most men in this momentous quarrel; for though he held a subordinate office in North's Government at the beginning of 1774, he had never spoken in favour of any measure of coercion. That year was the year of his father's death, his own expulsion from office, and his emancipation from the worst of the influences that surrounded him in politics and pleasure. It did not take long to show that the welcome the Rockinghams gave him, and the friendship with which Burke honoured him were not squandered on a mere political adventurer. With his opposition to the American War Fox began a reformed career, a career of devotion to great causes that has not yet been surpassed in our history. The part Burke played in turning the eye of that impetuous soul to the strong and steady light of a great public ideal was acknowledged without stint or reservation in that immortal scene, nearly twenty years later, which closed, amidst the first thunderclaps of the Revolution one of the most honourable of all the friendships of politics. The pupil of the Rockinghams, Fox soon became the informal leader of the Opposition, and during the next seven years he bore the brunt of the attack. He refused to join in the secession of 1776, and the fear he inspired is revealed in the well-known letter in which George III. urged North to take advantage of Fox's visit to Paris to hurry on Parliamentary business. His speeches during those years were thought by many

who heard him to be the best he ever made, and he threw himself heart and soul into a cause which he believed to be the cause of liberty in England as certainly as it was the cause of liberty in America.

The moment when Fox crossed the House in 1774 was the deciding point in the chief American issue. Nine years earlier Grenville, who made the mistake of reading the despatches from his colonial Governors, had tightened the administration of those trade laws, which were the concrete embodiment of the mercantile theory, and imposed the Stamp Act. There followed protests in the colonies and the break-down, from other causes, of the Ministry at home. In 1763 the Rockingham Ministry, in the face of the King's displeasure, relaxed the commercial regulations, and repealed the Stamp Act, whilst asserting in the Declaratory Act that England had authority over the colonies both in legislation and taxation. The Rockinghams always argued that the restoration of friendly feeling in America showed that, although they had retained the right of taxation, they had undone the mischief which had followed on its exercise. To maintain that spirit in the midst of the constitutional disputes which had arisen between the Governors and the Assemblies required tact and foresight, and the brilliant Minister who became Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1767 had little of either. All the discontents excited by the raising of the constitutional issue had found a more or less violent expression in the colonies, and even Chatham complained in his correspondence of "the infatuation of New York, and of the disobedience to the Mutiny Act, which will justly create a ferment here, open a fair field to the arraigners of America, and leave no room to any to say a word in their defence." In May 1767 Townshend brought in his famous measure suspending the legislative functions of the New York Assembly till the Mutiny Act should be complied with, establishing a Board of Commissioners with large powers to superintend the execution of the laws relating to

trade, and raising a trifling revenue by various small custom duties. The quarrel grew hotter. There were non-importation agreements in America: several of the colonial Assemblies were dissolved, on account of resolutions condemning the proceedings of the English Government, and the home Government replied in January 1769 by carrying an address, suggesting the revival of an old law of Henry VIII. which empowered the Governors to bring colonists accused of treason to England for their trial. Next year the Government decided to try a compromise. They repealed all the duties except that on tea, and it was only by a majority of one in the Cabinet that the tea tax was retained. The famous scenes at Boston; the appointment of Committees in Massachusetts and Virginia to investigate colonial grievances; the hearing of the petition of Massachusetts for the removal of Hutchinson and Oliver; Wedderburn's terrific denunciation of Franklin, these are so many stages in the development of the final chapter of the quarrel. In 1774 the Government set itself to break down the disobedience of Massachusetts by force, and three coercive Bills were carried through Parliament; one closed the port of Boston, another remodelled the Charter of Massachusetts, so as to transfer executive and judicial authority to the Crown, and the third arranged that persons accused of particular offences might be sent out of the Colony for trial. By these measures the door was shut on compromise and accommodations, and the issue was fairly laid between the rival obstinacies of two very stubborn peoples.

Fox was not a Free Trader, but he shared with the great Free Trader a belief that rescued him from one of the dominant apprehensions in the English mind. Like Adam Smith he argued that America would be an agricultural state, and not an industrial competitor to the mother country.

"He could not see that American independency would so soon rise as the honourable gentleman imagined, to maritime pre-eminence. The Americans could have no

inducement to hunt for territory abroad, when what they quietly possessed would be more than they could occupy and cultivate. They would find the advantages of conquest unequal to those of agriculture; and remembering that man had naturally a predilection for the enjoyment of landed property, they would find it impossible, in a country where land was to be had for nothing, to propagate a spirit of manufacture and commerce. Every American, more or less, would become the tiller and planter, and the country might, in some future and distant period, be the Arcadia, but it could never be the Britain of the world."[1]

Protected by this lateral defence from some of the bad commercial arguments, he was, from the first, entirely free from the bad political reasons for coercing America, for he grasped the great truth that political freedom was the essential condition of a sound and beneficent or a permanent colonial system. He saw at once that it should be the sovereign end of British statesmanship to empty the relationship between the colonies and the mother country of any notion that would do violence to the self-respect of the former. To many Englishmen that notion was the whole value of the colonial relationship. There was much in the history of America between the Peace of Paris and the explosions of rebellion at Boston to explain the sympathy the Court excited for its policy of coercion. It needed courage and foresight when the mass of the nation called for the spur to declare that colonial policy must be ridden on the snaffle. There was enough of the old Adam in the English nature, outside the Court, to make the language of mastery and supremacy ring very pleasantly in the ear, when the colonists were flinging the tea into Boston harbour, and defying the mother country to do her worst. Of the great Englishmen who set themselves against those passions not one was more constant or more determined than Fox from the day he opposed the coercion measures of 1774, to the day North's Government was driven from office. The resistance

[1] *Speeches*, vol. i. p. 124.

to the war produced some of Burke's greatest aphorisms and some of Chatham's most splendid oratory, but nowhere was the whole issue stated more compactly or more completely than in Fox's declaration in 1774, "I take this to be the question, Whether America is to be governed by force or management," or in his declaration in October 1776, "the noble lord who moved the amendment said that we were in the dilemma of conquering or abandoning America; if we are reduced to that, I am for abandoning America."

Whether this particular dispute could have been settled by management will never be positively known, for it was not till February 1778, or three years after Burke's great motion for conciliating America, that North introduced his propositions for redressing everything the colonists complained of. Much had happened in the interval, and there were memories over and above the common bitterness of war, in a struggle between men of the same race in which the mother country had borrowed allies not only from Hanoverian barracks, but even from Indian wigwams. By the Declaration of Independence in 1776 the thirteen colonies had been committed to resistance, and most important of all were the treaties signed between France and America a few weeks before North made his motion. During the war the military fortunes of the colonists were sometimes nearly desperate; the moral determination of a very large part wavered, and the Declaration of Independence struggled through many hesitations and misgivings, for the old sentiment had died hard; but the alliance with France was a decisive event. If the colonies were now finally lost to the Empire, it was at any rate some consolation to the Opposition to know they had resisted every measure that had exasperated the colonial spirit, and that the catalogue of follies which had thrown the Americans into the arms of England's inveterate enemies was no longer than the catalogue of their own defeat in the lobbies.

Was that loss final and certain in 1778? Chatham thought the catastrophe so terrible that a supreme effort must be

made to avert it, and though he had carried his opposition to the policy of coercing the colonists to the extreme point of withdrawing his son from the army, he believed it would be less calamitous to subdue the colonies than to release them from their relationship with England. The Rockinghams thought otherwise. To Fox a conquered America meant not merely a useless but a mischievous empire, and to persist in the attempt to conquer America was to aggrandise France and Spain. "What have been the advantages," he asked two years before, "of America to this kingdom? Extent of trade, increase of commercial advantage, and a numerous people growing up in the same ideas and sentiments as ourselves. Now, Sir, would those advantages accrue to us, if America was conquered? Not one of them. Such a possession of America must be secured by a standing army; and that, let me observe, must be a very considerable army. Consider, Sir, that that army must be cut off from the intercourse of social liberty here, and accustomed, in every instance, to bow down and break the spirits of men, to trample on the rights, and to live on the spoils cruelly wrung from the sweat and labour of their fellow-subjects;—such an army, employed for such purposes, and paid by such means, for supporting such principles, would be a very proper instrument to effect points of a greater, or at least more favourite importance nearer home; points, perhaps, very unfavourable to the liberties of this country."[1]

All the energy Fox had thrown into his resistance to the American War, he threw into the prosecution of the war with France, and in November 1778 he summed up in a fine appeal, ending with a curiously Thucydidean passage, the nature of the war with France, and that of the war with America, "You have now two wars before you, of which you must choose one, for both you cannot support. The war against America has been hitherto carried on against her alone, unassisted by any ally; notwithstanding she stood alone, you have been obliged uniformly to increase your

[1] Nov. 6, 1776. *Speeches*, vol. i. p. 61.

exertions, and to push your efforts to the extent of your power, without being able to bring it to any favourable issue; you have exerted all your strength hitherto without effect, and you cannot now divide a force found already inadequate to its object; my opinion is for withdrawing your forces from America entirely, for a defensive war you never can think of; a defensive war would ruin this nation at any time and in any circumstances; an offensive war is pointed out as proper for this country; our situation points it out, and the spirit of the nation impels us to attack rather than defence; attack France, then, for she is your object; the nature of the war with her is quite different; the war against America is against your own countrymen; that against France is against your inveterate enemy and rival; every blow you strike in America is against yourselves, even though you should be able, which you never will be, to force them to submit; every stroke against France is of advantage to you; the more you lower her scale, the more your own rises, and the more the Americans will be detached from her as useless to them: even your victories over America are favourable to France, from what they must cost you in men and money; your victories over France will be felt by her ally; America must be conquered in France; France never can be conquered in America.

"The war of the Americans is a war of passion; it is of such a nature as to be supported by the most powerful virtues, love of liberty and of country, and at the same time by those passions in the human heart which give courage, strength, and perseverance to man; the spirit of revenge for the injuries you have done them, of retaliation for the hardships inflicted on them, and of opposition to the unjust powers you would have exercised over them; everything combines to animate them to this war, and such a war is without end; for whatever obstinacy enthusiasm ever inspired man with, you will now have to contend with in America; no matter what gives birth to that enthusiasm, whether the name of religion or of liberty, the effects are the

same; it inspires a spirit that is unconquerable and solicitous to undergo difficulties and dangers; and as long as there is a man in America, so long will you have him against you in the field.

"The war of France is of another sort; the war of France is a war of interest; it was interest that first induced her to engage in it, and it is by that same interest that she will measure its continuance; turn your face at once against her, attack her wherever she is exposed, crush her commerce wherever you can, make her feel heavy and immediate distress throughout the nation, and the people will soon cry out to their government. Whilst the advantages she promises herself are remote and uncertain, inflict present evils and distresses upon her subjects; the people will become discontented and clamorous, she will find the having entered into this business a bad bargain, and you will force her to desert an ally that brings so much trouble and distress, and the advantages of whose alliance may never take effect."[1]

Fox was an indefatigable and a singularly accurate critic of the wretched administration of North's Government; he felt acutely the humiliation of allowing the enemy's fleet to command the Channel and threaten the coasts; and he spared no pains to drive an incompetent First Lord of the Admiralty from office, and at the time the danger was at its height he frequented the ports, and lived partly on shipboard. In a letter to Fitzpatrick he described the emotions he felt at the spectacle of a great English fleet making ready for battle, and the affection and delight inspired in him by the navy throughout his career were never more conspicuous than they were during these perilous months. It is remarkable that in the days when he mistrusted Pitt the most, Fox never voted against any proposal to strengthen the navy,[2] and it is not unreasonable to suppose that this was partly due to the fact that no Whig was ever quite sure of the use to which an army might be put by the Court at home.

[1] Nov. 26, 1778. *Speeches*, vol. i. pp. 136, 137.

[2] Cf. p. 296.

The violence with which Fox opposed the war with America has been censured by Mr. Lecky who draws a distinction between the spirit of Fox's opposition and that of Chatham's. It is a distinction rather difficult to discern. Chatham's name possessed a weight to which that of no other Englishman could pretend, and it was no light matter for a man whose words carried across the Channel and across the Atlantic to rejoice publicly that America had resisted, to declare that the American cause was the cause of freedom, and to predict that there would be foreign intervention. The truth is that Fox and Chatham knew very well that the cause of colonial freedom was also the cause of English freedom. In October 1776 when the American fortunes seemed desperate Horace Walpole wondered that any friend to British freedom could view with equanimity the subjection of America. If that year had seen the extinction of American resistance, the King's system would have been fastened almost indissolubly on English politics. How far, as it was, that system had hardened may be gathered from the tenacity with which it survived a blacker period of humiliation and failure than that through which Chatham had driven France. The Opposition were fighting a thankless battle, for all the instincts of a high-spirited people fortified the folly of the Court, but it was a battle to decide whether the King should finally rule and ruin England.[1]

[1] It is interesting to notice some of the divisions—

April 1774.	Bill for regulating charter of Massachusetts	carried by	239 to 64
Feb. 1775.	Fox's Amendment to Address . .	defeated by	304 ,, 105
Mar. 1775.	Bill for restraining Commerce of New England	carried by	215 ,, 61
Nov. 1776.	Motion for revision of laws by which Americans think themselves aggrieved . .	defeated by	109 ,, 47
Dec. 1777.	Fox's motion for inquiring into the state of the nation	defeated by	178 ,, 89
Feb. 1778.	Fox's motion that no more of the old corps be sent out of the Kingdom . . .	defeated by	269 ,, 165

(The only time Gibbon voted against American War. See *Gibbon's Memoirs*, ed. by Dr. Birkbeck Hill, p. 324.)

The same idea of colonial freedom entirely governed Fox's attitude to the question of the government of Canada to which Pitt addressed himself, after long and useful inquiry, in 1791. When Pitt introduced his Quebec Bill Fox remarked that it was of course too early to pronounce on the scheme, but "he was willing to declare that the giving to a country so far distant from England a legislature and the power of governing for itself would exceedingly prepossess him in favour of every part of the plan. He did not hesitate to say that if a local legislature was liberally formed, that circumstance would incline him much to overlook defects in the other regulations because he was convinced that the only means of retaining distant colonies with advantage was to enable them to govern themselves."[1]

In the same spirit he said later that "Canada must be preserved in its adherence to Great Britain by the choice of its inhabitants, and it could not possibly be kept by any other means." It is interesting to notice that the first effect of Pitt's Bill was to introduce a large number of loyalist immigrants from the States, men who had hitherto been deterred from making Canada their home because they thought it would be governed autocratically.[2] Pitt's scheme lasted down to the Rebellion, and it is instructive to notice that the very arrangements Fox criticised in Parliament were those that ultimately led to the break-down. Pitt

Nov. 1778.	Amendment to Address . .	defeated by	226 to 107
Nov. 1779.	,, ,, . .	,,	233 ,, 134
Nov. 1780.	,, ,, . .	,,	212 ,, 130
May 1781.	Motion for Peace . . .	,,	106 ,, 72
June 1781.	Motion on State of American War (Pitt spoke in favour)	defeated by	172 ,, 99
Nov. 1781.	Motion for delaying supplies . .	,,	172 ,, 77
Jan. 1782.	Fox's motion of censure on First Lord of Admiralty	defeated by	236 ,, 217
Feb. 1782.	Conway's motion for putting an end to the war	defeated by	194 ,, 193
Mar. 1782.	Cavendish's vote of censure . .	,,	226 ,, 216

[1] *Speeches*, vol. iv. p. 202.

[2] See Kingsford's *History of Canada*, vol. vii. p. 223.

divided Canada into two provinces, establishing in each an elective Assembly and a Council which was to be partly hereditary and partly nominee. He also reserved a seventh of the Crown lands for the Protestant clergy. Fox deprecated the division of the colony, as tending to split up French and English, in a cautious speech which showed that he was fully alive to the difficulties of the situation; but the provisions regarding the Council and the Assembly, and the reservations for the Protestant clergy he opposed very sternly. He considered the qualification of £5 a vote for the Assembly too high, and the number of members inadequate (sixteen for Lower and thirty for Upper Canada), whilst he condemned the whole plan of creating hereditary honours in a British colony, and all the arrangements respecting religious endowment. Pitt said it was the intention of these provisions to enable the Governor to endow the Protestant clergy of the Established Church, and he added it might possibly be proposed to send a bishop to sit in the Legislative Council. Fox replied that it would be better to establish the Roman Catholic religion or the Presbyterian religion; that the amount reserved for the clergy was excessive, and that the idea of sending a bishop to sit on the Legislative Council was "in every point of view unjustifiable." The quarrel over these religious reservations was one of the chief difficulties in Upper Canada thirty and forty years later. Fox persuaded Pitt to increase the number of the Assembly for Lower Canada from sixteen to thirty, but on the subject of the Council he found Pitt quite intractable. Burke who made many speeches on the Bill, but scarcely any about it, supported Pitt's idea of an hereditary Council very warmly, as did Wilberforce who said these new aristocrats might be only saplings at first, but they would one day become forests. Fox argued that it was unreasonable to transplant the idea of an hereditary order into a British colony, and that if the Legislative Council was to be quite dependent on the Governor the whole purpose of popular government was defeated. Fox himself proposed

that the Council should be elective with a high qualification, both for a seat and a vote. The chief cause of irritation in Canada during the disturbances forty years later was that the representatives of the provinces had no control over Ministers, and by the Act which put Lord Durham's recommendations into force, the division into the two Canadas was abolished, and the arrangements Fox had criticised were superseded by an elective Council.

A very different problem faced England in the East where she was brought into contact with a whole universe of unknown and dissimilar races through the agency of a trading company. Were her interests as a vicarious ruler in that vast world to be left to the destructive avarice of commerce, and was England to acknowledge no obligations to the myriads of tribes, the broken fragments of the Mogul Empire, in whom the white adventurers of all countries saw nothing but means to their aggrandisement, and the subjects of a very rough and profitable dominion? Since that time British rule in India may have often been mistaken, maladroit, shortsighted; it may suffer from the tendency of a bureaucracy to stiffen into formal and rigid policies, and from its reluctance to explore resolutely new conditions, or to delegate any part of its authority, or it may suffer from the supine negligence which is too often the temper of a democracy governing despotically a huge population of whose history and gigantic philosophies it knows nothing. But at least British rule has not been chartered rapacity, and it has been based on the express repudiation of all the loose and sinister morality men like Warren Hastings were only too ready to apply to political emergency. That that question was so answered is due to Burke and Fox, more than to any other two men in history.

To understand how deep and fast-dyed was the horror the study he made, as a member of the Select Committee, of Indian Government printed on Burke's mind, it is only necessary to remember that the first time an India Bill

came into the House of Commons whilst he was a member, Burke defended with the zeal and passion he seldom withheld from the cause of prescriptive right, the immunity of the India Company from all interference by the Government. That was in 1773, when North carried the first Bill that infringed the Company's Charter. By that Bill the chief judicial offices in India were made appointments of the Crown, and a Governor-General of Bengal, Behar and Orissa with a Council of four was to be appointed for five years by the Act, and though these appointments were to revert afterwards to the Directors, they were subject to the approbation of the Crown. This Bill was supported by some of the proprietors of the Company, as well as by Clive, whose first career of brilliant victories and private plunder had been followed, and in the eyes of Burke redeemed, by a second career of strict integrity and austere rule devoted to checking conquest and expansion, and to eliminating corruption from the Company's service. In many respects a drastic measure, the Bill was a tentative approach to the maxim Chatham had laid down, that the government and revenues of the territories of the East India Company should be assumed by the Crown, and that nothing but their trading privileges should be left to the Company. It is curious to reflect in the light of later history that the Bill was supported by Fox, and opposed by Burke, and that it was that Bill which made Warren Hastings the first Governor-General of Bengal, and Francis, his lifelong enemy, one of his Council of four.

The next great effort to reform the Government of India led to very different results, for it destroyed the men who had the hardihood to make it. The famous Bill of 1783 is generally understood to have been Burke's handiwork, and it is certain that both Fox and Burke threw themselves into the project with the resolute enthusiasm of strong and militant conviction. The evils for which they had to find a remedy were on a grandiose scale, and they had been published from the housetops of India and England. Two select

Committees had sat, one with Burke as its most prominent member, the other, a secret Committee, with Dundas as its chairman, and their reports were an unsparing revelation of the fraudulent disorder that marked the Company's rule in India, and it is only fair to add, a monument to the conscientious public spirit of the men who had investigated that painful field of research. During Rockingham's Government these reports had been printed, and the House of Commons adopted a number of condemnatory resolutions, amongst others one ordering the Directors to recall Warren Hastings, an order the Directors had obeyed and the proprietors, on Rockingham's death, had negatived.

This was the condition of things the Coalition Ministry had to encounter and the India Bills were one of the two great contributions Fox and Burke made to the cause of honest and merciful Government in India. It was an inevitable result of the system which made the government of India to so many generations a question of dividends and patronage and influence, that a vested interest was created at home in the abuses of Indian administration. The chief obstacle to Clive's wise reform for abolishing private trading among the officials was the eager rapacity of the proprietors, who called for their twelve and a half per cent., and wished their servants to supplement deficiencies in their salaries at the expense of the governed. Everyone who had made a fortune, or hoped to make a fortune, or who had relations who had made a fortune or hoped to make a fortune was an enemy to reform, and boroughs and all the merchandise of politics at home were in the market for men who had gone out to India poor, and had returned staggering under the weight of their ill-gotten gains. As long as India was governed by men who regarded the country not as their home, nor as some great illuminated theatre of all their own virtues and vices, in which they might naturally have a motive to display their virtues, but solely as the field of picturesque plunder in which they were to make their private fortunes and gain all the public prizes private

fortunes could buy, so long was there a corrupt interest at home to support and defend corrupt government abroad. In India there was as yet no strong tradition of public integrity, and no strong motive to just and conscientious administration, and at home there was a combination whose tie was allegiance not to some public cause but to private interests, a combination ubiquitous, persistent, rich, powerfully handled, a direct menace to the state. The whole fabric of honest government was assailed by that species of influence which inevitably arises whenever politics abroad are blended with the master spirit of unscrupulous and impatient finance.

Great efforts were made by Pitt and Thurlow to convince the country that Fox and Burke were not acting as sincere reformers, but merely as very grasping party men, when they tried to overthrow this whole system and extricate the government of India from these sinuous and stubborn clutches. It was a charge easily made, and not too easily refuted by statesmen who had bewildered the public by the coalition. Yet no accusation could have been more remote. The interests Fox and Burke were attacking were extremely powerful, and the crusaders refused to listen to certain overtures made to them in which it was suggested that the course the Bill had to travel would be a good deal easier if the project of impeaching Warren Hastings were laid aside. Fox and Burke knew well enough what forces were arrayed against them. In a private letter in which he had no reason to dissemble his mind Fox said, "If I had considered nothing but keeping my power, it was the safest way to leave things as they are, or to propose some trifling alteration, and I am not at all ignorant of the political dangers which I run by this bold measure; but whether I succeed or no, I shall always be glad that I attempted, because I know I have done no more than I was bound to do, in risking my power and that of my friends, when the happiness of so many millions is at stake." But apart from these private testimonies, to

suppose Fox and Burke were not in earnest is to suppose them masters of a solemn and portentous hypocrisy such as the whole history of politics has rarely produced. The general complaint against Fox was not that he was too sparing, but that he was too prodigal with his own sentiments in his speeches, that he never acquired the reticence which is so important a quality in a public man in the public eye, and that his dangerous eloquence betrayed him into a risky and inopportune candour. His whole career of indiscreet enthusiasms is the final answer to the hypothesis that the indignation with which he described the infamies done in the name of England, or the appeal he made to the public opinion of England to redeem that good name, in one of the finest speeches he ever delivered in the House of Commons, were merely the stage lighting of simulated passion, and the gorgeous disguise of party avarice. The truth is that Fox was never more convinced of anything in his life than he was of the value of his Bill, and he looked forward eagerly to that Bill as the justification of the Coalition. Nor again is it easy to believe that all the resonant phrases, with which Burke fed and inflamed his accumulated anger over the wrongs of Hastings' victims, were nothing more than the rhetoric of designing faction. That the picture Burke had of India with its sacred and immemorial antiquities rifled and profaned by men to whom they were common plunder, was overdrawn may be true, but that it was a wilful imposition, no spontaneous product but an artificial creation for ends no more exalted than the aggrandisement of party, is simply incredible. Of Burke it may truly be said that the story he had read in the reports to the Committee on Indian government haunted his mind as incessantly and as sadly as the wrongs of Calas haunted the mind of Voltaire.

Of Fox's Bills for establishing just and honest government in India, one was concerned with methods of administration and was virtually adopted by Pitt a year later, but the other, the Bill that led to the defeat of the Coalition Government,

went to the very root of the existing system. It is not difficult to follow the process of reasoning which created the new scheme of Indian Government. The rule of the Company Fox regarded as incorrigibly bad. It had been condemned in two reports, and the best illustration of the weakness of the existing arrangements was to be seen in the position of Warren Hastings who, as Governor of Bengal, had defied the House of Commons and had been supported by the Court of Proprietors in withstanding the authority of the Directors. Fox believed it to be impossible to reform the Government of India unless the present system was abolished, and a substantial control exercised over the administration of India. "If he were totally unacquainted with the transactions in India, which had brought on the company's calamities, he was of opinion that he could argue, *a priori*, that they would happen; because, from the constitution of the company, nothing else could happen. But with the mass of evidence that the secret committee had laid on the table, it would be madness to persevere in a system of government that had been attended with such fatal consequences. It had been truly remarked by a learned gentleman last year, (Mr. Dundas,) that if a man wished to read the finest system of ethics, policy, and humanity, he would find it in the letters of the court of directors to the company's servants abroad; but if the reverse of all this should be looked for, it might be found in the manner in which the orders of the directors were observed in India; for there, inhumanity, false policy, peculation, and brutality were to be discovered in almost every step; orders were given on one side; they were disobeyed on the other; and the whole was crowned with impunity."[1]

But where was the control to be established? Some reformers, such as Dundas, argued that it should be in India. To that Fox objected very strenuously. Experience had shown conclusively, he argued, that the final and complete responsibility for the government of India must be at home,

[1] *Speeches*, vol. ii. p. 203.

and that it was too risky to leave power and authority in an official surrounded by all the temptations of India. Two conditions he regarded as indispensable to reform. The final authority must be at home, and there must be some element and promise of permanence in the system of government.

To secure these objects Fox proposed to supersede the Court of Directors by a Board of seven Commissioners; the first Commissioners to be named in the Bill, and future appointments to the Board to be vested in the Crown. These Commissioners were to sit for four years. There was also to be a subordinate body of nine assistant directors chosen by the Legislature from among the largest proprietors, for the purpose of managing the details of commerce. The proceedings of these bodies were to be entirely public, and they were to be kept most carefully in records for the inspection of both Houses of Parliament. Similarly all the officials in India were to keep careful minutes of all their transactions for the information of Parliament. Publicity and responsibility to Parliament were the central principles of Fox's remedy for the misgovernment of India. The ideas underlying the Bill were borrowed largely from North's suggestions during the last year of his Ministry. North had proposed that the power of the Governor-General should be strengthened, and that a tribunal should be established in England for the purpose of exercising jurisdiction over all servants of the Company in India. Fox rejected the first of these ideas, and applied the second. The principle of nominating officials by Act of Parliament had of course been adopted in the Regulating Act of 1773, by which Parliament appointed Warren Hastings as Governor-General, and appointed his council of four. It was clear that this scheme was vulnerable in many particulars. It was in the first place a fairly direct and complete subversion of the Charter of the Company. Pitt attacked it vigorously on this ground, and all Banks and other great corporations quickly took alarm and set up a furious clamour. Fox

defended himself against these charges of rapine by declaring boldly that respect for her good name as well as pity for millions of lives that were at her mercy, made it impossible for England to treat the right of a chartered company to empire as irrevocable. "What is the end of all government? Certainly the happiness of the governed. Others may hold other opinions; but this is mine, and I proclaim it. What are we to think of a government, whose good fortune is supposed to spring from the calamities of its subjects, whose aggrandisement grows out of the miseries of mankind? This is the kind of government exercised under the East India company upon the natives of Indostan; and the subversion of that infamous government is the main object of the bill in question. But in the progress of accomplishing this end, it is objected that the charter of the company should not be violated; and upon this point, Sir, I shall deliver my opinion without disguise. A charter is a trust to one or more persons for some given benefit. If this trust be abused, if the benefit be not obtained, and its failure arises from palpable guilt, or (what in this case is full as bad) from palpable ignorance or mismanagement, will any man gravely say, that trust should not be resumed, and delivered to other hands, more especially in the case of the East India company, whose manner of executing this trust, whose laxity and languor produced, and tend to produce consequences diametrically opposite to the ends of confiding that trust, and of the institution for which it was granted?—I beg of gentlemen to be aware of the lengths to which their arguments upon the intangibility of this charter may be carried. Every syllable virtually impeaches the establishment by which we sit in this House, in the enjoyment of this freedom, and of every other blessing of our government. These kind of arguments are batteries against the main pillar of the British constitution. Some men are consistent with their own private opinions, and discover the inheritance of family maxims, when they question the principles of the revolution; but I have no scruple

in subscribing to the articles of that creed which produced it. Sovereigns are sacred, and reverence is due to every king: yet, with all my attachments to the person of a first magistrate, had I lived in the reign of James the Second, I should most certainly have contributed my efforts, and borne part in those illustrious struggles which vindicated an empire from hereditary servitude, and recorded this valuable doctrine, 'that trust abused is revocable.'

"No man, Sir, will tell me, that a trust to a company of merchants, stands upon the solemn and sanctified ground by which a trust is committed to a monarch; and I am at a loss to reconcile the conduct of men who approve that resumption of violated trust, which rescued and re-established our unparalleled and admirable constitution with a thousand valuable improvements and advantages at the Revolution, and who, at this moment, rise up the champions of the East India company's charter, although the incapacity and incompetence of that company to a due and adequate discharge of the trust deposited in them by that charter, are themes of ridicule and contempt to all the world; and although, in consequence of their mismanagement, connivance, and imbecility, combined with the wickedness of their servants, the very name of an Englishman is detested, even to a proverb, through all Asia, and the national character is become degraded and dishonoured.[1] To rescue that name from odium, and redeem this character from disgrace, are some of the objects of the present bill; and gentlemen should, indeed, gravely weigh their opposition to a measure which, with a thousand other points not less valuable, aims at the attainment of these objects."[2]

The second of the two characteristics of the Bill most loudly attacked was the method of appointing the Commissioners. The criticisms on this part of the scheme were contradictory, for some objected that it was meant to give

[1] Twenty years earlier, it must be remembered, Chatham had said that "India teems with iniquities so rank as to smell to earth and heaven."

[2] *Speeches*, vol. ii. pp. 238–240.

a permanent supremacy to the Whig party, whilst others argued that it would increase the influence of the Crown. The method chosen was not novel, for it was the method adopted in the only previous measure for controlling misgovernment in India. It would certainly have been wiser not to have nominated seven party men, but no eighteenth century government would have acted otherwise, and no Minister was more careful to make patronage a composite element of party government than Pitt who exclaimed very loudly against Fox's conduct. It was complained of Fox by his Irish clients that he refused to keep half as strict an eye as Pitt on party considerations in making appointments, and that Whigs suffered an injustice in consequence. The other objection seems to be more weighty, for the Bill would have transferred all Indian patronage to the Crown after four years, and would have been some compensation for the offices the Rockinghams had abolished. But this objection applied to any scheme that took the control out of the hands of the Company, and Fox considered it imperative to withdraw that control.

Neither of these objections had any relation to the welfare of India, but they were the whole stock-in-trade of the Opposition, and the debates were concerned exclusively with them. It was their weight that vanquished the Coalition Government; the phantom of a power that held chartered rights in no respect terrified every corporation; the prospect of a more powerful Crown incensed Fox's old supporters; the spectacle of a Whig aristocracy that should be a rival to the Crown terrified the Court. Pitt played skilfully, and unscrupulously, and successfully on these humours and consternations. But there was an objection to the Bill considered in a light in which the Opposition never considered it, as a Bill for reforming the government of India. In their haste to take the government of India out of the hands of a mercenary interest, Fox and Burke were placing it in the hands of an untried authority, bringing a mind quite fresh and raw to the bewildering problems of

Indian administration. The integrity of the new Commissioners was indisputable, but their qualifications began and ended with their honesty. Such a scheme was a desperate remedy, for it was the scheme of men who were conscious that no remedy which was not desperate could be effective. Yet it is obvious that deliberate misgovernment was not the only evil to which India was liable. To redress old injustices and to shelter India against future injustice Fox made careful and detailed provision, and many of his arrangements were afterwards adopted in Pitt's legislation. But what protection had India under his scheme against an improvident or a mistaken administration? To place great authority in a Governor-General was to run the risks of his moral collapse, but to turn to account at the same time the advantages of his special experience. What was wanted was a scheme under which the knowledge that had been acquired of Indian life and habits should be applied to the government of India without the dangers of an irresponsible administration. He would be a bold man who would argue that there has been no waste of Indian resources under an alien government that has been in many respects singularly conscientious. The native optimism of bureaucracy, however honourable and public-spirited, is not a temper very tolerant of those local customs and prejudices which make up so much of the life-blood of every people. Both Burke and Fox showed in their speeches that they realised how important it was to treat those customs and prejudices with respect and patience, but it would probably be agreed that Pitt's scheme, under which India was governed down to 1858 by a dual system, establishing a new department of government as a Board of Control over the Directors of the Company, came nearer than Fox's scheme to fulfilling the conditions of an intelligent administration.

Fox's India Bill, in spite of the momentous political catastrophe that was its climax, has been eclipsed by the dramatic splendour of the second great blow the Whigs struck for good government and integrity in the East. The

impeachment of Warren Hastings will always remain a subject of controversy. To some it is a signal example of ingratitude to a great public servant, to others it is a signal example of the courageous and patriotic vindication of a high standard of national conduct. The issue raises in its acutest form the whole question of the mutual dealings of peoples. Hastings was no freebooter; his crimes were the public crimes of a man who in his private dealings respected honour and morality, and in his public dealings respected neither.

There is indeed an aspect of his administration which is rarely remembered in English discussion, the view set out by Mr. Romesh Dutt in his careful study of Indian Economics, that Warren Hastings' internal legislation was mistaken and destructive, and did lasting injury. But we may grant that his intentions to the men he ruled were benevolent, and that he did his best to shield them from individual rapacity. The circumstances again of his crimes were peculiar. The analogy of the Roman Empire has been applied very mischievously and very ignorantly to England's relations with communities and states that belong to the same order of civilisation as herself, as if the England of this and of the last century were the solitary beacon of enlightened and stable government in the general darkness and confusion of the human race. But in her contact with the dissolving fabric of Asiatic government it is true to say that England has found herself roughly in the position Rome occupied at one time in the world. And if it is to be assumed that on the whole the growth and preponderance of British power was a contingency to be preferred to the rule of any other foreign invader, or to the perpetual anarchy that followed on the collapse of the Mogul Empire, in what sort of a temper are we to judge the crimes which marked the beginning and the consolidation of that power? It will certainly be agreed that if we take any standard at all of morality, it is impossible to characterise in half tones the things Warren Hastings did. The unprovoked attack on

the Rohillas, the tacit sanction given to the brutalities of our native allies in a quarrel that was not ours, the extortions he practised on Cheyt Singh, and the treatment of the Nawab of Oude, all these were part of a policy in which violence and fraud had an undisputed ascendancy, and, although Warren Hastings' reputation has gained by recent researches, his greatest biographer admits that he was singularly blind to the immorality of these proceedings. He recognised no distinctions of right and wrong, justice or injustice in the critical emergencies that put our Indian Empire to the hazard. Elsewhere our fortunes were overcast. In one continent the English flag had been struck, and all over Europe the English name had lost half its terror and authority. In that anxious and sombre hour Warren Hastings thought he had but one duty in India, to keep, to strengthen, and to fortify British power, and to save the Company by any method or any crime. If there was a tribe whose spirit or whose nascent power he feared, he was quite ready to ally himself with a savage ruler, and to allow British troops to be accomplices in the work of massacre and rapine. If he was in desperate straits for money to prosecute a war or to maintain a government, he was quite as extortionate as an Indian Rajah with an exhausted Exchequer and a helpless population. In a word this western ruler encountered enemies, rivals, and the tides of peril and adversity with the moral shamelessness of the East.

To decide whether these crimes are to be condoned, we must resolutely ask ourselves whether it was a better thing to found and keep an Empire by such means (an Empire which since its establishment is generally admitted to be less of a misfortune than any other issue to the desperate complications of India) than not to found or keep it at all. Fox and Burke at any rate would have had no difficulty in replying to that searching question. For them the whole justification of our Indian rule was precisely that its methods and its spirit were not the methods and the

spirit Warren Hastings borrowed from rival rulers in the East. "Conquest," said Fox, "gives no right to the conqueror to be a tyrant," and this aphorism distinguished British rule in India from that of native despotism. The value of our system of government depended on its observance of a more exacting standard of public morality and good faith than the standard we found in any Asiatic government,[1] and a proconsul who forgot that he had to maintain this moral supremacy reduced the English rule to a mere scramble for territory and illicit dominion. Nor was it likely that men living in the midst of riches wrung from India would overlook the likelihood that, if once the overriding of morality were sanctioned in governors whose aims and purposes were public, it would be difficult to enforce any morality upon governors whose irregularities were private and personally sordid. For Fox and Burke the principle of honest dealing was of paramount importance, and no political advantage could outweigh the moral damage done in weakening or discrediting it.[2] They made a stout effort to secure good government of our possessions, but if the final choice was between no Indian possessions at all, and possessions acquired on Warren Hastings' principles, they would certainly have chosen to leave those vast territories to anarchy and disorder rather than capture and hold them for civilisation under a black flag.

[1] "That the maintenance of an inviolable character for moderation, good faith, and scrupulous regard to treaty, ought to have been the simple grounds on which the British government should have endeavoured to establish an influence superior to that of other Europeans over the minds of the native powers in India; and that the danger and discredit arising from the forfeiture of this pre-eminence, could not be compensated by the temporary success of any plan of violence or injustice."—One of resolutions of House of Commons, May 28, 1782.

[2] "He felt himself thoroughly justified in contending that, in spite of any narrow principle which temporary distress or local circumstances might seem to call for, such as keeping the mogul out of the hands of the French, or of Tippoo Sultan, it ill became a nation of great weight and character, like Great Britain, to depart from general systems, founded in wisdom and in justice, for any such petty considerations."—*Speeches*, vol. iii. pp. 195, 196.

There was one field in which Fox's championship of the oppressed was successful, even if its success was rather long delayed. There are few more interesting psychological studies than that of the movement and shades of eighteenth century opinion on the slave trade. Chatham, in many respects the greatest statesman of the century, wished to develop that trade as an important part of England's commerce. Lord Dartmouth, a pious evangelical was strongly averse to checking "a traffic so beneficial to the nation," and, though Wesley applauded Wilberforce's exertions, Whitefield was a strong supporter of slavery, and with the help of Lady Huntingdon, he did a good deal to introduce it into Georgia. An interesting controversy arose in the religious world over the whole subject. Some persons, like Whitefield, favoured slavery, because they thought it brought great remote and inaccessible populations within the reach of Christian missionaries, whilst others had qualms about baptizing or converting slaves, on the ground that slavery was unobjectionable for pagans, but inappropriate for Christians; a distinction corresponding to that made by the Greeks between Greeks and barbarians. It was solemnly suggested that baptism would invalidate the legal title of the master to his slave, but the alarm inspired by so ominous a superstition was dispersed by a timely declaration from the Bishop of London, to the effect that "Christianity and the embracing of the Gospel does not make the least alteration in public property."

The interests involved were very extensive, and they were not limited to England, for though some of the colonies disliked the slave trade, and accused England of forcing it upon them, there were others that regarded the slave trade as the basis of their prosperity. The West Indian planters who passed harsh legislation for the treatment of slaves in the colonies were largely represented in England by rich and absentee owners. The Court was inevitably and strenuously hostile to humane reform. It was no light matter to develop a strong public opinion

in the midst of all these adverse influences, and the men who did it are remembered with veneration and gratitude. To Granville Sharp, Zachary Macaulay, and Clarkson is chiefly due the credit for those careful and laborious researches which placed before the public eye the dreadful picture of the Middle Passage, and all the unfathomable and inarticulate misery of the slave trade. That trade meant the rooting up in a century of more than three millions of negroes, captured in slave hunts, crowded into vessels where the regular mortality among strong men was seventeen per hundred, and transported with every circumstance of brutality and suffering to islands where almost any form of punishment or coercion was legitimate. It was proved in one trial that a master of a slave ship might throw a hundred and thirty slaves into the sea, without raising any issue more important than the precise distribution of costs and losses.

Wilberforce was the protagonist of the abolitionists in Parliament, and in spite of innumerable disappointments and vexations, he lived to carry his great project to success. The effect of this crusade upon public opinion is seen in the number of petitions, 103 in 1788, and 519 in 1792, in the protests against the slave trade from the Corporations of London, Bristol, and many large towns, and in a widespread agreement to leave off the use of sugar as a product of slave labour.

There was no matter in which Fox engaged that was nearer to his heart than the abolition of the slave trade. When Pitt brought the question before the House of Commons in 1788, in place of Wilberforce who was ill, Fox stated that he had meant to take it up himself, but that on hearing Wilberforce's intentions he had come to the conclusion that proposals for reform would come with more authority from Wilberforce than from himself. The subject had been brought before the Privy Council for enquiry, and Fox argued that the enquiry should have been an enquiry by the House of Commons. There were at this time three

courses proposed, immediate abolition, gradual abolition, or regulation of the slave trade. The agitation was wisely limited to the slave trade, because the abolition of slavery would have raised the old American difficulties with the colonies, and the first step towards getting rid of slavery was to abolish the commerce in slaves. Fox's own opinions on these various courses was stated emphatically in the first debate, "He had no scruple to declare in the onset that his opinion of this momentous business was that the slave trade ought not to be regulated but destroyed."

The friends of the slave trade, who were very powerful in Parliament, supported by the Bishops and most of Pitt's colleagues, were in no want of plausible apologies. They argued that the trade was not responsible for the condition of the slaves, for the traders merely brought negroes who were already slaves, either prisoners of war, or men condemned for witchcraft or adultery; they pleaded the commercial importance of the trade, its value to England, and the danger of letting it slip into the hands of foreigners; they described it as the nursery of the navy; the sugar planters were helpless without slave labour, and the Newfoundland fisheries wanted a slave population to eat the refuse of the fish they caught. Accusations of inhumanity were warmly repulsed, one of the Bishops being particularly conspicuous in combating imputations on the character of the planters under whose rule there was so high a death-rate among the slaves that the planters argued that without the slave trade slave labour would become extinct. Some enthusiasts went to the extreme length of maintaining that the plight of the slaves was better than that of the lower orders in England. Fox was not likely to treat these arguments with much patience or mercy. He was very severe on the hypocrisy which pretended that we were serving some great moral purpose in sanctioning slavery as a punishment for adultery, which was a far worse offence in England, where marriage was a regular institution, than in Africa where it was not, or "for witchcraft which we know to be no crime at all." The argument that slavery was

necessary for our commerce he disputed on its own merits, though he refused to admit that any argument based on the prosperity of the country could justify a stupendous crime against humanity. The contention that we should be abandoning a lucrative trade to other countries, and that if profit was to be made out of all this human suffering we might as well make the profit as anyone else, Fox compared to the reflections of a person addicted to felony, but now conscious of his first guilt, who found himself driven to robbing someone in the highway, because he knew that if he spared his victim someone else would rob him. "If it was a trade founded in violence and injustice, Great Britain ought to wash her hands of it at any rate: nor was the practice of other countries anything at all to the question. . . . Mere gain was not a motive for a great country to rest on as a justification of any measure; it was not the first purpose of a well-regulated government; honour was its superior as much as justice was superior to honour."

There was no man who hated more cordially the spirit which is very full of our national greatness, and very fearful of risking anything in any great cause. "As the first nation in Europe, we ought to set the example, and in the cause of justice and humanity, to claim the post of honour—of danger if there were any."[1] Another argument that was commonly used was the argument that the colonies would contrive to create an illicit trade in foreign vessels. "If it were true," answered Fox, "that they would be supplied by foreign ships,—Dutch or American, no matter what,—in God's name let them in any ships but ours! Let us wash our hands of the guilt of the trade. If other nations would commit robbery and murder, that was no reason why we should imbrue our hands in blood."[2]

Several speakers argued that if the slave trade were abolished the colonies would be finally alienated, one of them remarking that it "would be a breach of the compact that tied the colonies to the Mother Country," and another warn-

[1] *Speeches*, vol. iv. p. 402.

[2] *Ibid.* vol. iv. p. 400.

ing the House that "by want of temperance and prudent conduct we had lost America." Fox's reply was prompt and resolute. He did not agree with Francis that it would be no serious loss if the colonies broke away. He regarded the loss of America as a great misfortune, and he would regard the loss of the West Indian colonies as a great misfortune. The advantages however of the connection to the West Indies were great and palpable, and he did not think the colonies would sacrifice that connection for the sake of the slave trade. "Next it was said, we owe much to the West Indies. If we do, let us pay what we owe, or say that we cannot; but let us not say that the kidnapping of 240,000 negroes is a fit compensation from Great Britain to her colonies. . . . I am not much alarmed by the possibility of our islands getting into habits of intimacy with foreigners; but if they should be so infatuated as to prefer the continuance of this detestable and pernicious trade to their connection with this country, I would not vote a shilling of the money of my constituents to coerce them. This I have always said and always thought, and always I was using something like the coward's threat being persuaded, that they would consider the loss of our connection, and the advantages they derive from it, as the most formidable threat that could be made to them."[1]

In the last years of the century the champions of all good causes had to sustain a hard struggle beneath dark and inexorable skies. Wilberforce's great cause was no exception. In 1788 it had looked as if the triumph of the cause was imminent, and a temporary measure was passed that year to mitigate the horrors of the Middle Passage. From that year the prospects grew steadily worse. Pitt's colleagues, Dundas, Thurlow, and Jenkinson, fought abolition by every kind of device, and the French Revolution and the French war reinforced selfishness with panic. In 1791 Wilberforce was beaten by 163 to 88, in 1792 a motion for immediate abolition was defeated in favour of gradual abolition, and

[1] *Speeches*, vol. iv. p. 401.

when the House of Commons agreed that the trade should cease in 1796, the House of Lords rejected the bill. During the next few years there was strong opposition to every proposal that meant the sacrifice of a lucrative trade, and the alienation of the colonies. Pitt himself, whose speech in favour of immediate abolition in 1792 had won the ecstatic admiration of Fox and Grey, dissuaded the abolitionists from pressing the question, and actually allowed the trade to revive and increase under the British flag. In the war the naval ascendancy of England had destroyed the slave trade to the French and Dutch colonies, and, when these colonies passed under the British flag, Pitt refused to prevent the resumption of a trade which no one had stigmatised more sternly than he. The result was a brisk activity. "It was computed that under the Administration of Pitt, the English slave trade more than doubled, and that the number of negroes imported annually in English ships rose from 25,000 to 57,000." Wilberforce declared in 1802 that the trade had been carried, especially of late years, to a greater extent than at any former period of our history. In 1804 the political conditions improved, and Wilberforce wished to bring in a resolution forbidding any further importation of slaves into the conquered colonies, but Pitt prevented him by promising to issue a Royal Proclamation, a promise he fulfilled rather more than a year later. When Fox came into office all this indecision and vacillation ended. Mr. Lecky quotes the remark that "had Pitt perilled his political existence on the issue, no rational man can doubt that an amount of guilt, of misery, of disgrace, and of loss would have been spared to England and to the civilised world such as no other man ever had it in his power to arrest."[1] In 1788 Pitt had branded the slave trade as detestable, and by 1806 that trade was not only in existence but enormously extended. Fox came into office in February. He died in September, and he was too ill to attend Parliament after June. He had all Pitt's difficulties, the war, a hostile Court, a divided Cabinet. But it was

[1] Lecky, *England*, vol. v. p. 344.

known that he was in earnest, and in the few months left to him of life, he did what Pitt had failed to do in fifteen years of office. He carried two Acts, one forbidding the employment of British seamen, ships, or capital in the foreign slave trade; the other forbidding the employment in the colonial slave trade of any shipping not already engaged in it, and he carried through both Houses of Parliament a resolution pledging Parliament to proceed with all practicable expedition to the total abolition of the British slave trade; a resolution carried into full effect next year. In his speech on that motion he made that often quoted declaration, which is perhaps his most fitting epitaph. "So fully am I impressed with the vast importance and necessity of attaining what will be the object of my motion this night, that if during the almost forty years that I have had the honour of a seat in parliament, I had been so fortunate as to accomplish that, and that only, I should think I had done enough, and could retire from public life with comfort and the conscious satisfaction that I had done my duty."[1]

[1] *Speeches*, vol. vi. p. 659.

CHAPTER IX

FOX AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

The Revolution different from contemporary revolutions. Burke's passionate interest. He came to glorify the ancient régime. Fox saw more clearly the collapse of government. Fox's great distinction that he kept his faith in the Revolution long after its excesses had alienated those who had begun by admiring it. His correct judgment of the extenuating circumstances of the Terror, and of the strength of the Revolutionary sentiment.

IT was small blame to any man that he misunderstood the energy or the direction of the forces which were destined to "shake the dead from living man," and to build a new nation on the broken splendour of old France. The portents of the French Revolution were strange and baffling to eyes that had seen revolutions everywhere. In America a colony was become a people; in Poland periodical convulsions had opened the chapter which was to close with the life of that unhappy kingdom; in Sweden a king had overturned the constitution, and as a crowned demagogue had defied the ambitions of Russia; in the scattered dominions of Austria old rights and privileges had disappeared before the reforming impulses and the precipitate mistakes of a beneficent pedant. It was a generation of political catastrophe, of benevolent *coups d'état*. But the French Revolution, though Louis sometimes talked of saving France himself, as if he hoped to ride and subdue the forces of her wild enthusiasm, was unlike any of the processes which were changing the face of other European states. The Revolution was not the act of a Government,

it was the consequence of the breakdown of government. The administrative order had collapsed; public affairs were in confusion amidst bankrupt finances and the slow ruin of decay; and a new religion was flashing into the minds of men the power and the inspiration which were irrevocably gone from the lifeless forms of an exhausted system. If France had left the beaten track of human knowledge marching into the unseen with the rapture and exaltation of a new faith, it is little wonder that the men who watched her career could find nothing in the familiar stars to teach them its meaning or its goal.

Contemporary Europe did not attach much importance to the first acts of the Revolutionary drama. The internal disturbances of one nation in that genial comity of envious and intriguing states were generally important only as offering an opportunity to others for aggrandisement. That France should be preoccupied involuntarily at Paris was a welcome accident for Powers whose preoccupations in Poland were anything but involuntary. Even the English Government did not expect much more than a passing crisis which for the time would disable France as a continental Power, and eventually liberalise her institutions. But there were two men, Fox and Burke, who knew from the first that the revolution going on in France was destined to have much larger consequences for that nation than such consequences as spring from local revolutions, and their sympathies were absorbed in its fortunes.

Burke grasped two great truths about the Revolution. He saw that in separating past and present by an impassable chasm, in making a new France with an even and unbroken surface, in laying a pitiless hand on local privilege and crooked rights, the enthusiasts who were improvising a constitution were making a highway for an usurper. Burke saw this as clearly as did Mirabeau. He conjured up the vision of a Napoleon ten years before Napoleon became consul. He saw also that if Europe was to join battle with the Revolution, she must fight under the flag of an ideal in the strength

of an austere faith ; there must be no afterthoughts of acquisition, no side glances at rich lands, and no wistful dreams of extended frontiers and new subjects. The forces of a moral Niagara were not to be stemmed or held or turned aside by the puny hands of crafty sovereigns whose first care was to direct its destructive energy into channels where it might serve their private ambitions. All this Burke saw and proclaimed with that eloquence which made even his errors sublime. It is unhappily the case that if he had seen neither of these truths the Europe and England of his day would have lost nothing. The things he saw never influenced Europe or England for the better in their policy ; where his judgment was wrong and his vision circumscribed, he lent to squalid causes and mean ambitions the might and majesty of a pure faith, and a massive eloquence. Never have the unlucky accidents of fortune given such a Peter the Hermit to reaction, superstition, and the terror and the prejudice of a dying order.

It is clear that even if Fox and Burke had agreed in their calculations of the Revolution, they would have differed in their moral verdict. Whereas Fox, as we have seen, had never accepted the existing constitution as final and divine, Burke's whole soul shrank from the prospect of the tiniest change. To disfranchise a single borough was to bring England to the threshold of popular madness and anarchy. A revolution which swept away orders and privileges in instants of its irresistible progress was a blinding avalanche to a man who could not watch without dismay the slow and gentle advance of sure-footed reform. To such a temper the Revolution was nothing but wanton anarchy destroying an elysium of good government and benevolent designs. Its first mission was destruction, and few men have feared the gods with so pious an awe as Burke felt for property and established order. It laid the axe at the root of inequalities, and Burke had that reverence for the hierarchies of this world that only comes from the conviction that they are made in another. Its heroes and martyrs were just the men he

dreaded and despised—men who saw visions and dreamt dreams, saw the world, its rulers, its institutions, its miseries, and its hopes in the sudden light of a few abstract principles, and dreamt dreams of a new and better world, based on goodwill, contentment, and a sovereign equality. The horrors he saw and imagined around him made the old order a bright and radiant memory; in condemning the present, he amnestied the past. Louis was a beneficent and liberal ruler, and the National Assembly should have been content to serve their country as his docile instrument. Marie Antoinette who had squandered Turgot's genius and the last hope of saving France from financial ruin, and who would have welcomed an Austrian army to subdue her turbulent subjects—Marie Antoinette was not merely a woman whose sufferings, bravely borne, expiated her follies, she was the blameless heroine of the dissolving order of Christian chivalry. Even the high-born emigrants who fled across the frontier, as soon as a finger was laid on their privileges, to summon the foreigner and to show that a France which was no longer beneath their heel had ceased to be their country were held up to admiration, and their white cockades were to glisten in the van of a crusading army. Burke even began to trace in the old monarchy of France the strange and dissimilar lineaments of our own, and to hold up the example of the Whig Revolution as the precise model to be followed in a crisis which, instead of involving kings and mighty families in a conflict for power, had thrown the old world and the new into mortal combat. It was because he saw this mirage and not the real landscape of France that Burke never grasped what had been the burden of the old order, or how stupendous a task its restoration must be; he heard the impatient footfall of counts and royal princes across the frontier; he had no ear for the tramp of millions of common men to whom France was the Revolution and the Revolution was France.

Fox did not see France and French affairs through the mists, and fancies which turned all the débris of the old

edifice, in Burke's eyes, into stained glass and alabaster. He knew the confusion which Burke attributed to the Revolution was older than the Revolution. He knew the old order was bad and he knew it was gone. As early as 1787 in warning the House of Commons not to increase the military burdens of the nation he had shown that France had retired from Holland not from military weakness but because her excessive expenditure had brought her to ruin.[1] The old government of France was a hollow shell. Burke thought all that reasonable reformers could want would have been secured if the three orders of the States General had met and voted the King's demands. The truth is they would never have been summoned if the King's Minister had not been faced with bankruptcy. The old order stood before the Revolution, but in ruins. The Revolution did not make anarchy for it found anarchy. It did not sweep away a system of moderate and responsible government: it swept away a system of arbitrary and absolute government. Fox's insistance upon this truth is to be explained by his anxiety to justify his approval of the French Revolution on the grounds of the very Whig doctrines which Burke invoked against it. Burke's ideal of government was a benevolent aristocracy. If he shut the door uncompromisingly on popular theories and popular aspirations, he had withstood even more sternly the encroach-

[1] See *Speeches*, vol. iii. pp. 342, 343, Dec. 10, 1787. "Mr. Fox reasoned upon the policy of economy, and contended that it was by a judicious saving of our resources alone that we could enable ourselves to meet a war and its difficulties when a war should arise. He reminded the Committee of the speech of Cicero before the Roman senate, when he had in one of his orations, in substance said, that 'the example of Julius Cæsar was more forcible than any argument which he could urge.' France was in the present case to us what Julius Cæsar was to Rome. France had an army of 160,000 men, a powerful marine and her frontier towns such as Lisle and others were in complete repair. What then could have induced France to incur the disgrace resulting from her late conduct? Nothing but her inability to go to war in consequence of the miserably exhausted state of her finances: exhausted by the impolitic extent of her military preparations. Were we then so unwise as to follow the steps which had led France to ruin?"

ments of the royal power. To say that Fox understood all the impulses and energies of the French Revolution would be to attribute to him an insight and a penetration denied to all other Englishmen of his time. He said himself he never understood Rousseau's Social Contract—the flaming bible of the Revolution. But to argue that his constant recurrence to the subject of the Whig Revolution shows that he knew no other standards or measurements for liberty is to overlook the purpose for which he quoted it as an example. No English Whig could tolerate the French Monarchy. Burke contrived not only to tolerate but very nearly to worship it. He did so by substituting for the actual institutions of France certain fanciful images of his own—by converting what was in truth a wilderness into a smiling Eden of prosperous order. Fox showed, and showed triumphantly, that as far as the destruction of the old system was concerned, the French Revolution deserved the sympathy of the Whigs who, like Burke, glorified the memory of 1688.

In disputing whether it was a good or a bad thing that the old system had fallen, Burke and Fox were both applying Whig doctrines — with the difference that Fox appreciated, more fully than Burke, the conditions of the case. But what of all that came after? What of the rapid crises which turned French history into a series of dissolving views, in which men and types and governments appeared for an instant, only to be blotted out and to leave the surface vacant for some new apparition? To all these bewildering phases of the Revolution Burke and Fox brought very different minds. For the Revolution had flung violently into the midst of live controversy and speculation those very questions on which the Whigs had agreed to differ in mutual tolerance. The English Whigs were agreed in withstanding George. There was no unity in their views of the limits of the constitution. Burke made the existing order in England an absolute type; to him freedom and popular contentment were summed up in the

maintenance of the precise details of the English constitution; Parliamentary Reform was as much the enemy as royal ambition, for the stability he cherished was threatened by both. Fox on the other hand had voted and spoken for Parliamentary Reform, and as early as 1783 had traversed Burke's favourite doctrine by declaring that "it was the best government where the people had the greatest share in it." He held that the constitution was to be judged, like all other things mortal, by its relation to the popular welfare. Burke made it the type of a rational manly freedom in all countries. Fox had that great and saving sense of relativity which is perhaps, more than anything else, the intellectual secret of Liberalism, and which vanished by some extraordinary misfortune from Burke's mind with the first rustle of the Revolution. He resolutely combated the doctrine that every constitution must be good or bad according as it resembled or differed from the English constitution of 1789. He refused to believe that freedom knew only one type, and to condemn France for seeking to create another. He showed that it was as ridiculous for Burke always to fling the heroes and lawgivers of English reform at the heads of the National Assembly, as it was for the National Assembly to harp on Lycurgus and Solon. The English constitution, he reminded Burke, was the product of native experience and idea, not an importation from Rome or Greece. In all these respects Fox and Burke moved in different atmospheres. The one was essentially Liberal, the other exclusively Whig. The one welcomed, whilst the other dreaded experiment. Fox was hospitable to all those new hopes and aspirations, which inspired the revolt against the bonds of the Middle Ages, whilst Burke faced and hated them as a militant anarchy.

It is Burke's chief distinction, as a discerning Whig, that he dreaded the Revolution before a single bone had been broken or a single castle burnt to the ground. It is Fox's chief distinction, as an intrepid Liberal, that he believed in the Revolution long after its first promise

seemed to have perished in violence and crime. Read a century after the event, the story of the September massacres chills and freezes the first enthusiasm with which we follow the fortunes of the Revolution. How did it sound in the ears of contemporaries? The English aristocracy of that day had lived in close and constant touch with the brilliant society whose most brilliant members were in their graves or in prison or in exile before the end of 1792. Fox himself had the gentlest and tenderest of natures. The very exuberance of his first hope might have tempted him to renounce, with all the bitterness of disillusioned generosity, the principles those excesses had disfigured and deformed. He knew well enough what the cause of French liberty must suffer in public opinion from atrocities which would add the indignation of moderate men to the fear and jealousy of men who trembled in sympathy for their own privileges. Well might he write that "the horrors of the 2nd of September were the most heartbreaking event that had ever happened to those who like himself were fundamentally and unalterably attached to the true cause."[1]

Yet he brought to these horrifying events something of the clear sight and discriminating judgment of posterity. He grasped two great truths which contemporary spectators were too ready to pass over in oblivion, without which French affairs could not be rightly judged. The first is that those excesses were no sudden outburst of a new and strange spirit—the demon of Revolution—which held life cheap and gloated over cruelty with bloodshot eyes. When Louis XVIII. fled from the Tuileries in 1814 he left behind him a list of men who were to have been punished if the émigrés had succeeded: 34 deputies to be quartered; 103 to be broken on the wheel; 254 to be hanged, and 348 to be sent to the galleys.[2] This was mere cold-blooded

[1] *Correspondence*, vol. ii. p. 371. Letter to his nephew.

[2] The full list is given in the article "Réaction monarchique pendant la Révolution" in vol. ix. p. 44 of the Review *La Révolution française*. M. Spronck, the author of the article, quotes the dictum "La Révolution se défendait, la Réaction se vengeait."

revenge and not a slaughter planned like the crimes of the Revolution in national panic. Life was held in scant respect under the old régime. Few things could be more savage than the spirit of the old laws of France. A picturesque illustration of their brutality is given by Mr. Morley in his book on Voltaire.[1] In 1762 Morellet published a selection of the most cruel and revolting portions of the procedure of the Holy Office, drawn from the Directorium Inquisitorium of Eymeric, a grand Inquisitor of the fourteenth century. "Malesherbes in giving Morellet the requisite permission to print his Manual had amazed his friend by telling him, that though he might suppose he was giving to the world a collection of extraordinary facts and unheard of processes, yet in truth the jurisprudence of Eymeric and his inquisition was, as nearly as possible, identical with the criminal jurisprudence of France at that very moment." Many who wept over the Church because her possessions were seized, and her priests driven from their homes, forgot her own iron and inexorable cruelty in the heyday of her strength and her prosperity. In a society where men and women were sent to the stake, or to the wheel, or to torture for speaking against the Virgin Mary, it was not strange that a populace beside itself with suspicion, panic, and unruly dominion thought the life of man of little account and the forms of justice not very precious. Men were pitiless; they were grown up under a pitiless law. Their terror and revenges were cruel and savage, but they had at least an august example in a Church fearful for her privilege and unforgiving to her adversaries, who had seemed to have forgotten for all time her sublime message of mercy to mankind. The crimes of the Revolution will never be judged too lightly; Fox never excused them, but he saw it was unjust to attribute to the seven devils of democracy vices and wickedness which were far older than the Revolution. It is indeed the truest, and in one sense the bitterest condemnation of the crimes of

[1] *Voltaire*, p. 228.

the Revolution whether at home or abroad, that they were not new but the crimes of old France. Fox saw this truth, which escaped Burke; he divined also the intimate relation which existed between the excesses and the dread of invasion.[1] It is now known that the success or the failure of the invaders was followed almost automatically by the tightening or the relaxation of the spirit of slaughter at home. Revenge itself has something of the gentle touch of mercy by the side of panic, and it was panic more than anything else which splashed Paris with the blood of her children.

It was a true instinct that kept Fox amidst all these horrors unalterably attached to the cause of the Revolution. Let us remember how its first acts must have struck him. He saw a great assembly of men drawn from all parts of France calling for religious toleration, demanding that no man should be arrested except in cases provided for by law, asserting that the free communication of ideas and of opinions was one of the most precious of the rights of men, abolishing a cruel criminal procedure, destroying the system under which judges bought their office from the king, and declaring that the nation itself was sovereign. He saw, in a word, the downfall of feudalism. We can understand with what rapture of hope and confidence Fox, who had fought so many losing battles for freedom, watched what seemed the spontaneous triumph of Liberalism and Humanity in the very citadel of despotism. It was no difficult matter to satirise all these professions, when the hour of violence and slaughter came. Toleration when men must accept a dictatorship or go to the guillotine, no more arbitrary punishment and the spectre of the Revolutionary Tribunal perpetually darkening Paris, the free commerce of ideas and no persuasion but the bloody will of the *sansculotte*!

[1] Cf. *Speeches*, vol. v. p. 157. "Those who were concerned in framing the infamous manifestoes of the Duke of Brunswick, those who negotiated the treaty of Pilnitz, the impartial voice of posterity will pronounce to have been the principal authors of all those enormities which have afflicted humanity, and desolated Europe."

It is easy to laugh over the patriots and philosophers discussing the metaphysics of revolution, and the rights of man, with the red-handed mob of Paris at their doors, and revolutions they never dreamt of rumbling over France. Yet we who can judge of these things from afar know that Fox was right when he stubbornly believed the collapse of the old system to have been the greatest thing that had happened in the world. Bloodshed and violence, murder and sudden death did not make up the Revolution, they divided but did not distinguish the new from the old, and the final triumph of the new order meant that the rights of nations conquered the rights of kings, and that the unnoticed millions of France were become the people of France. With the Revolution there came into politics a spirit of justice which inspired all the movements of the nineteenth century, and was destined to create not only a new social France but a new political Europe. The French Revolution gave morality a place in politics. Fox was right in his view that its ideas, fantastic, vapouring, and trivial as their expression often seemed, outweighed the curses its excesses brought on humanity. The cataclysm which produced the September massacres produced also the Code Napoléon. Those ideas were enduring things, and not the transient apparitions of a mad philosophy.

Even the Paris that massacred, and rioted, and wrote its own shame in blood and injustice with a mad defiance, for all Europe to see, that bowed its head for tyrants from Robespierre to Napoleon, groaned and slew and died beneath the gleam of the dawn. We can see this because we are not blinded by the violence which was nature's retribution on grey-headed failure. Fox saw it in the midst of all the bloodstained shapes the Revolution bore. He knew that the cause of the Revolution was the cause of human liberty, that it was the cause of the French nation, and that there was at any rate one method by which the spirit of that Revolution could not be exorcised or crushed, the method of proscription and a conspiracy of kings.

CHAPTER X

FOX'S POLICY IN 1792

Fox's earlier view of France. His anti-Bourbon sentiment. How far justified? The Revolution transforms the diplomatic arrangements of Europe. Fox's view of the Coalition. The questions at issue between France and England in 1792–93. Pitt's relations with Chauvelin and Maret. Fox's relations with Chauvelin and Talleyrand. Danton's policy. Fox's opposition to the war. Pitt's illusions about its gravity.

FOX'S conduct in opposing the French Commercial Treaty of 1786 and the war of 1793 has been spoken of as one of his "amazing vagaries." Such a charge argues a curious blindness to the grounds of his policy before the Revolution, and to the reasons which made him five years earlier speak of France as "the inevitable enemy." The spirit of his earlier policy may be summed up as the spirit of a peaceful Chatham. Peaceful it emphatically was. Fox hated war, and the mimicry of war; he hated war for conquest and for trade; he hated too a peremptory and domineering insolence in foreign affairs. His immortal speech on Pitt's mistake over Oczakow is perhaps the most tremendous chastisement that has ever been given to that diplomacy of which Hazlitt said that its bark is worse than its bite. No man was ever so merciless to ὕβρις. But Fox's peace was not the peace of isolation. He had all the Whig hatred of the Bute tradition and that Peace of Paris which had made his father so notorious. He held that England should play an active and a constant part in Europe in the maintenance of the "balance of

power." "By the balance of power he meant, not that every state should be kept precisely to its existing frontiers, but that no state should be allowed to become a danger to the rest." To him, as to other Whigs, there was one dynasty which appeared to aim at that supremacy. The Bourbons seemed to him the "bad sleepers" of Europe. He saw their handiwork whenever troubles arose, and he thought the vigilance of their ambition must be encountered by a diplomacy as constant, and as vigilant. This view made him as anxious as Chatham had been for a Russian alliance, it made him indignant that a French attack had been invited by the policy which distracted our energies and spent our resources in the American quarrel, it made him support strongly Pitt's action in Holland in 1789, and oppose as strongly Pitt's Commercial Treaty in 1786. France, he argued, was our inevitable enemy; for behind every Cabinet at Versailles there were the master forces of Bourbon ambition.

That Fox carried this view to an extreme point in his opposition to the Commercial Treaty, and that Pitt and Shelburne formed a more enlightened judgment, may readily be admitted. But his view of the French system of foreign policy was not unreasonable. The two great French Ministers under the Bourbon régime in Fox's lifetime were Choiseul (1763–1770) and Vergennes. Choiseul's whole aim had been to strengthen France for a war with England, which he regarded as certain, and with that object to build up within the Austro-French alliance a combination of Bourbon powers. The renewal of the family compact was a concrete example of his policy. Vergennes, who became foreign minister in 1774 risked and finally ruined the finances of his country in opposition to Turgot's advice, because the American War gave a favourable opportunity of attacking England. These things and, in particular, the disingenuous conduct Vergennes had practised towards England were still fresh in the minds of English politicians when Vergennes reversed his policy with the idea of forming an Anglo-French opposition

to Russian expansion in the East of Europe, and the Commercial Treaty was made. Fox's policy had been to make diplomatic connections in order to maintain England's position in Europe, and to preserve her from the necessity of a standing army. That position he thought to be threatened by the power which had been uniformly hostile, since he knew anything of English politics. There loomed up perpetually before his mind the spectacle of a restless, hostile France, marking her progress through alliances, combinations, defections, and intrigue by the chart of a constant and unalterable ambition.

With the Revolution this spectacle disappeared. The Bourbon policy was gone, however much of the Bourbon spirit of warfare still hung about France. Fox recognised at once that the Revolution had laid the spectre which had haunted his dreams for so many years. Writing on July 30, 1789, to Fitzpatrick he said, "If you go without my seeing you pray say something civil for me to the Duke of Orleans whose conduct seems to have been perfect, and tell him and Lauzun, that all my prepossessions against French connections for this country will be at an end, and indeed most part of my European system of politics will be altered, if this Revolution has the consequences that I expect." That the Revolution was to leave France a constant force on the side of morality and moderation in European politics was an expectation events were very soon to dispel, though, with the exception of her conduct in Avignon, Revolutionary France was not a warlike France before she was provoked. That Fox was literally correct in believing that the Bourbon policy was over, events were to prove within six months. The chief illustration of that aggressive policy which had aimed at creating a solidarity of anti-English interests had been the family compact. In January 1790 there was a dispute between England and Spain over the seizure of the English settlement of Nootka Sound on Vancouver's Island. If Revolutionary France had continued the diplomatic traditions of Bourbon France, the family compact would have

been carried out, and there would have been war with England. But the National Assembly did not agree to execute that instrument and Spain conceded Pitt's demands. There was a party in the Assembly that wanted war with England, the aristocratic party which was concerned for the interests of the French monarchy. With the majority of the Assembly there was open repugnance to a step that would have seemed to imply continuity of the foreign policy of a discredited dynasty. Fox may have been right or he may have been wrong in regarding Bourbon France in 1787 as the inevitable enemy, and in opposing war with Revolutionary France in 1792. To speak of his "amazing vagaries" is to overlook the Revolution which had burnt up along, with the rubbish and emblems of the old order, the family compact which held the Bourbons together.

The truth is that if any moral was to be drawn from that doctrine of the balance of power which had inspired Fox's suspicions of France before 1789, it should have prompted Englishmen to see danger in a very different quarter in 1792. Bourbon France had been a danger to the balance of power because she adopted certain principles of foreign policy which threatened the independence of other nations. But no principles could be imagined more directly subversive of the rights of nations and of the established order of Europe than the principles on which Austria and Prussia acted when they invaded France after the declaration of Pilnitz and the Brunswick manifesto. Their pretensions to interfere in the internal affairs of France were accompanied by very formidable designs of aggrandisement, for they aimed at nothing less than the partition of France. When Pitt argued for war in January 1793, in order to preserve the balance of power from French aggression, Fox asked very justly why he had not interfered to protect that same principle from Austria and Prussia six months earlier. That Pitt knew the aims of the allies is clear from Grenville's letter of November 7, 1792, to his brother, "I bless God that we had the wit to keep ourselves out of the glorious enterprise of the combined armies,

and that we were not tempted by the hope of sharing the spoils in the division of France, nor by the prospect of crushing all democratical principles all over the world at one blow." It is difficult to imagine any single event which would have given such a shock to the whole system of Europe as the partition of France, which, amongst other things, would have made Austria and Prussia into maritime powers, and yet Pitt's Cabinet were ready to see it consummated not merely in indifference but with something very much like sympathy. When France drove out her enemies and began to cherish dreams of conquest of her own, her ambitions were treated as immediate dangers. If despotic powers liked to dismember one kingdom, and to start out to dismember another, the vigilant policeman of Europe could watch undismayed and undispleased.

Fox saw clearly the dangers of the Coalition. He saw first of all that it implied a right of interference that was fatal to the independence of nations. He saw also that it could only act as a lash on the spirit and the wild terrors of France. His policy was not a policy of neutrality, but a policy of mediation. He wished England to mediate in order to protest against a dangerous doctrine, to save France from an unjust war, and Europe from the scourge of her retaliations. "His opinion was, that from the moment they knew a league was formed against France, this country ought to have interfered; France had justice completely on her side when we by a prudent negotiation with the other powers might have prevented the horrid scenes which were afterwards exhibited, and saved, too, the necessity of being reduced to our present situation. We should by this have held out to Europe a lesson of moderation, of justice, and of dignity, worthy of a great empire; this was his opinion with respect to the conduct which ought to have been adopted, but it was what ministers had neglected. There was one general advantage, however, resulting from this; it taught the proudest men in this world that there was an energy in the cause of justice which when once supported, nothing could

defeat. Thank God, nature had been true to herself; tyranny had been defeated, and those who had fought for freedom were triumphant!" It is curious to observe that Pitt did attempt in a tentative manner, and very late in the day, to carry out some scheme of this kind. He produced in 1800 a paper containing instructions to the British Minister at St. Petersburg, sent at the end of the year 1792, to interest Russia to join with England in a joint mediation to avert the evils of a general war. When this paper was made public Fox approved cordially of the instructions but remarked very justly that, as they were never acted on and the paper never communicated to France, they were a dead letter.[1] Pitt, by expelling Chauvelin three weeks later, cut short the experiment.

Pitt had not acted in the autumn of 1792 to prevent the invasion of France. By the end of 1792, England was no longer interested merely as a European power in the struggle on the continent, for two definite questions had brought her into direct controversy with France. The first was the opening of the Scheldt and the danger to Holland, the second the decree of November 19. It is doubtful whether either of these questions, even if France had refused satisfaction or explanation, would necessarily have involved war. The opening of the Scheldt affected both our commercial interests and our treaty pledges to Holland. As far as our commercial interests were concerned it must be noticed first that Pitt himself had been ready in 1784 to encourage Joseph II. to insist on the opening of the Scheldt, and secondly that by the Peace of Vienna which closed this very war the Scheldt

[1] Mr. Lecky makes an extraordinary comment on this speech in vol. vii. p. 166 of his *History of England in the XVIIIth Century*. He says that though this paper was never communicated to France its proposals were identical with those which were announced in the correspondence with Chauvelin. France was already at war with Prussia and Austria, and what Fox had proposed and what Pitt had suggested in this paper was the active use of the good offices of England to bring that war to an end, and not a mere assurance that England herself would not meddle with the domestic concerns of France. In the correspondence Mr. Lecky refers to, the English Government disclaimed any project of interference but *made no offer of mediation*.

was finally declared open. As for our treaty pledges, Holland did not call upon us to make war, and, at the very time war broke out, negotiations were actually proceeding under the sanction of Lord Auckland, our representative at the Hague, between the Dutch and Dumouriez. The second point at issue was the decree of November 19, a general decree promising "fraternity and assistance to all peoples who shall wish to recover their liberty" adopted in haste after the discussion of a particular appeal for help from the people of Mayence. Maret explained to Pitt on December 1st that the decree merely applied to Powers at war with France. Pitt replied that, if such an interpretation could be given, its effects would be excellent. The decree itself, like so many decrees adopted by the Convention, was not a deliberate declaration of the Government, but one of the extravagances of a democracy in long clothes; it was the motion of a private member, disapproved of by many of the more experienced members, and about as responsible as the motion which was adopted to change the name of Bordeaux. Unfortunately the intrigues of French emissaries in English politics gave it an exaggerated importance in the eyes of the English Government.

The question between Fox and the Government was not whether these things were worth a war, but whether it was worth while to try to prevent a war, or if that were impossible to try to define and limit it by negotiation. Fox proposed in December that a Minister should be sent to Paris to treat with the provisional Government. His motion[1] was negatived without a division. But there seems some evidence that Pitt was very near acting upon it, for the Record Office contains the imperfect draft of two despatches intended for someone proceeding as envoy to France, referred by Mr. Oscar Browning to December 1792. The strongest proof of the wisdom of Fox's policy is seen in the recapitulation of the events just

[1] "That an humble address be presented to his majesty, that his majesty will be graciously pleased to give direction that a minister may be sent to Paris to treat with those persons who exercise provisionally the functions of executive government in France, touching such points as may be in discussion, between his majesty and his allies and the French nation."

preceding the outbreak of war. On December 1st Pitt had an interview with Maret, in which he urged that either Maret or someone else should be authorised by the French Government to confer with the English Government. Pitt clearly thought that if this were done peace was still possible. The French Executive Council refused to replace Chauvelin, who was obnoxious to Pitt, as their agent for conferring with the English Government. Pitt, on this, refused to speak with Maret on state affairs. But on January 22nd the French Government, in reply to Chauvelin's complaints that his position was intolerable, decided to recall him, and sent Maret as Chargé d'Affaires to London to prepare the way for Dumouriez, who after treating with the Dutch was to come to London to treat with the English Government. What Pitt desired on December 1st, as a possible means of averting war, was thus accomplished on January 22nd. Unhappily before Maret had arrived, and before Pitt knew of the decision of the French Government, Chauvelin had been ordered to leave England.

Of Pitt's anxiety to avoid war there can be no doubt in the mind of anyone who has read the account of those momentous months in Ernouf's *Life of Maret.* Few stories are more tragical than that story of the fluctuating hopes of peace, with Pitt holding out against the Court, his Cabinet, and public clamour: Fox and Sheridan using all the influence of their sympathy with the Revolution to persuade Chauvelin to urge his Government to retract the November Decree: Maret untiring, hopeful, and adroit in the cause of peace: Chauvelin, a vain coxcomb, full of airs and pompous impertinences, busy with stupid intrigue and the fancied triumphs of his arts, admiring his own awkward and fatal follies: Le Brun dreading and disliking war, overborne by Brissot and the stronger Girondins: the very storms of the sea interfering at the most critical moment to dislocate the most hopeful negotiations. Of the part Chauvelin played in those months it would be difficult to speak too harshly. After doing all the mischief in his power whilst he still represented the French

Government, he did two fatal things on leaving England. On January 23 the Government ordered him to leave England in eight days. He left the next day, twelve hours before the despatch came from Paris announcing that Maret was appointed to succeed him and instructing him to give this news to Grenville. Chauvelin received this despatch on his way to Dover, and ignored it, and he and Maret passed each other in the night. Maret arrived on January 30, to find himself hampered by Chauvelin's conduct in disobeying the orders he had received. Chauvelin hurried to Paris, and by inflaming the opinion of France provoked the declaration of war. It was just when the man whom Pitt had trusted had been sent to London and the man whom he justly suspected had been allowed to resign by the French Government that war broke out.[1]

To understand exactly Fox's attitude in the winter of 1792–93 it is necessary to notice Talleyrand's proceedings in London. Chauvelin represented all the chimerical ideas of the Gironde; Talleyrand the sanity and foresight of Danton. Talleyrand was in constant touch with the Opposition, and all his efforts were directed to restraining the aggressive and crusading spirit in French politics. Dr. Robinet has placed Talleyrand's intimate connection with Danton beyond all reasonable doubt.[2] Dr. Robinet goes further and thinks that Danton himself was in communication with Fox and Sheridan during his visit to England in the month of August 1792.[3] It was Danton's policy to enlist on the side of France against the Coalition all the sentiment that was friendly to France or unsympathetic to the allies. If this object was to be effected, the doctrine of the armed propaganda must be abjured. Hence Danton and Talleyrand looked with impatience on all the wild language of such men as Brissot and Clootz. Later, it is

[1] It was the opinion of so good a judge as Maret that even at the last moment war might still have been avoided. But note Malmesbury's letter to Elliot, January 21, 1793: "War is a measure decided on, but don't proclaim it in the North before it is known in the South."

[2] *Danton Émigré*, pp. 12–16 and 270.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 29. This is only inference, see Balloc's *Danton*.

true, Danton accepted and enforced the policy of annexation in Belgium, but by that time several things had happened and Danton believed his own diplomacy had failed. Talleyrand was thus the informal representative in London of the school which repudiated conquest and armed propaganda and based its diplomacy on British friendship. Fox represented a party which wished to support France against the Coalition without surrendering any English rights. The influence of Fox and his friends was thus used in two ways. Talleyrand, and for that matter Chauvelin too, were made to understand that there would be no question of English sympathy with France if France assumed any claim to interfere with English affairs, whilst no opportunity was lost to prevent the English Government from taking any step which would provoke war. Chauvelin announced to Le Brun on December 7th that Sheridan had told him that the Whigs did not want war with France "s'il n'y a point d'agression faite contre la Hollande," but that they would make common cause with Pitt, and that they were assured of nine-tenths of the population, in repelling any idea of French interference. "Nous avons bien su, à nous seuls, donner à la France l'exemple d' une révolution, nous saurons aussi suivre le sien à notre manière et par nos propres forces, pour perfectionner notre gouvernement et y ajouter."

Fox and Sheridan did their utmost to strengthen the opposition to the idea of armed propaganda in France, and no French politician was under any illusion as to the terms on which their sympathy was to be had. Dr. Robinet goes so far as to talk of Danton's "alliance" with the Whigs. The term he used loosely to denote the identity of their objects; Danton dreading to make the struggle with the Coalition a war for some wild-eyed scheme of universal emancipation, Fox dreading to see England involved in a war for a counter-revolution. It was one of Fox's followers, William Smith, who acted as the agent in bringing Pitt and Maret together, and during the winter of 1792–93 Fox and his friends were chiefly employed in counter-working the

mischievous energies of Chauvelin. As long as Pitt was holding out against the clamour for a crusade, he had no better or more industrious allies than the leaders of the Opposition. All the hopes of peace, based on the existence and moral importance of a party in France that opposed aggression, were shattered by Pitt's concession to Court and popular feeling after the King's death. Chauvelin expelled could do even more injury than Chauvelin intriguing and posing in London. Fox was doing all he could to support the peace party in France, and Pitt had given the war party an overwhelming argument.

Talleyrand remained in London for more than a year after the outbreak of war, and Dr. Robinet thinks there is some evidence that the Duke of Bedford visited Danton in Paris in April 1793. The recollection of these diplomatic efforts to avert war in the eventful winter of 1792 remained on both sides of the Channel. When Fox made it his chief object to obtain the withdrawal of the proscription of the Revolutionary Government and to drive from office the minister who had made it, he had in mind those strenuous attempts to secure the triumph of commonsense in two excited populations in 1792. Danton, for his part, reverted to his old wise and generous view of the foreign policy of Revolutionary France. On April 13th 1793 he replied to a motion by Robespierre demanding the death-penalty for anyone who proposed to treat with the enemies of France, in a speech in which he threw over the November decree, and in spite of Robespierre's opposition a decree was adopted definitely repudiating the idea of interference in other countries. "La Convention nationale déclare, au nom du peuple français, qu'elle ne s'immiscera en aucune manière dans le gouvernement des autres puissances; mais elle déclare, en même temps, qu'elle s'ensevelira plutôt sous ses propres ruines que de souffrir qu'aucune puissance s'immisce dans le régime intérieur de la République ou influence la création de la Constitution qu'elle veut se donner." This step was the preliminary to the negotiations Le Brun tried

to open up with England in May 1793, negotiations that were divested of their slender hopes of success by the revolution of June and the fall of Danton.

Fox's policy can therefore only be condemned by those who condemn the policy which Pitt professed to follow. The question to be decided is whether his own conduct or the conduct Fox advised was the more likely to give effect to the opinions Pitt expressed when he disclaimed all intention of interfering in the internal affairs of France, when he avowed a strict neutrality in the quarrel between the Coalition and France, and when he argued that England should do her best to keep out of the war. Pitt clearly thought peace possible on December 1, he presumably thought peace desirable to the end. All his hopes indeed and the use of his special gifts were bound up in the maintenance of peace, for foreign affairs were a field of politics in which Pitt had suffered his only great reverse. When war breaks out it is easy to point to provocations on the other side. Pitt, it will be admitted, had provocations in the opening of the Scheldt, in the decree of November, in the extravagant welcome given to private Englishmen at the Bar of the Convention, in the activity of the French emissaries in England, and in the language used by French orators about the English Government, almost as bitter and as reckless as Burke's language about the French nation. The one act which was not a provocation was that on which Pitt retaliated by sending Chauvelin out of the country. But if a man thinks war a misfortune for his country the provocations he has received are not the measure of the wisdom of his action. He has to show not that he yielded to a just resentment in declaring war, but that he spared no effort to save his country from what he regarded as a disaster to his country. What is to be said of a Minister, who thinking war a calamity, having set in motion one process for preventing war by his message to St. Petersburg, having left open another avenue of escape in his indirect communications with the French Government and the conversations between Dumouriez and the Dutch,

made war certain before his own expedients to avert it had been tried by expelling Chauvelin and offering what was construed into an affront to France. The dispute in the Nootka Sound affair had dragged on for six months. The first decree that Pitt complained of had been adopted on November 16, and by January 24 Pitt had taken the fatal step. Yet there had not been wanting during those weeks hopeful signs of peace. If Pitt had been strong enough to withstand the King and to negotiate directly with the French Government, he would have given his own policy a fair trial under conditions that were at any rate not hopeless.

There was one theory on which Pitt was right in his action and wrong in his profession, and Fox was wrong in both. It was the theory that war with a Revolutionary Government on any pretext was a duty just because it was a Revolutionary Government. Burke, Windham, and their supporters who held this theory denounced the proposal to treat with bloodstained Ministers, and blushed for every hour of peace as a longdrawn infamy to England, the recreant Meroz in the day of Europe's battles. If their theory was right, Pitt was right in expelling Chauvelin. But judged by the same theory he was wrong in inviting the French Government through Maret to send an authorised agent to London, for in doing so he recognised the authority of the men whom Burke wished to treat as savages. If that theory was right Pitt was right in refusing to define his quarrel with France, for in doing so he distinguished the French Government from all other Governments, and made so purely domestic a concern, as the execution of their king, the occasion of war. On the same theory he was wrong in professing neutrality and an indifference to the internal affairs of France, and in holding any communications with Maret. The best description of Fox's proposal is that it would have distinguished Pitt from Burke, that it would have distinguished a war for specified objects from a war of conquest, that it would have distinguished England's cause from the cause of the crowned freebooters, whose armies France had driven back across her

frontiers, and that it would have left open all those doors to peace which Burke would have closed for ever. The truest comment on Pitt's final act is that it could only be defended on the assumption that his own policy throughout had been wrong, and that Burke's policy throughout had been right.

All Fox's efforts in the winter of 1792–93 were directed to two points. The first, to secure a definite negotiation with France, the second that our quarrel should be distinguished from that of the Coalition by a specific statement of our grievances and our objects.[1]

[1] Terms of the Amendment, moved on February 12. That we learn, with the utmost concern, that the assembly, who now exercise the powers of government in France, have directed the commission of acts of hostility against the persons and property of his Majesty's subjects, and that they have actually declared war against his Majesty and the United Provinces; that we humbly beg leave to assure his Majesty, that his Majesty's faithful Commons will exert themselves with the utmost zeal in the maintenance of the honour of his Majesty's crown, and the vindication of the rights of his people; and nothing shall be wanting on their part that can contribute to that firm and effectual support which his Majesty has so much reason to expect from a brave and loyal people, in repelling every hostile attempt against this country, and in such other exertions as may be necessary to induce France to consent to such terms of pacification as may be consistent with the honour of his Majesty's crown, the security of his allies, and the interests of his people.

Text of Resolutions moved by Mr. Fox on February 18, 1793.

I. That it is not for the honour or interests of Great Britain to make war upon France on account of the internal circumstances of that country, for the purpose either of suppressing or punishing any opinions and principles, however pernicious in their tendency which may prevail there, or of establishing among the French people any particular form of government.

II. That the particular complaints which have been stated against the conduct of the French government are not of a nature to justify war in the first instance, without having attempted to obtain redress by negociation.

III. That it appears to this House, that in the late negociation between his Majesty's ministers, and the agents of the French government, the said ministers did not take such measures as were likely to procure redress, without a rupture, of the grievances of which they complained; and particularly that they never stated distinctly to the French government any terms and conditions, the accession to which, on the part of France, would induce his Majesty to persevere in a system of neutrality.

IV. That it does not appear that the security of Europe, and the rights of independent nations, which have been stated as grounds of war against France, have been attended to by his Majesty's ministers in the case of Poland, in the invasion of which unhappy country both in the last year, and more recently, the

He saw that if these measures were not adopted, England's war with France would degenerate into a war for a counter-revolution. He had not long to wait for the dismal fulfilment of his warnings.[1]

most open contempt of the law of nations, and the most unjustifiable spirit of aggrandizement has been manifested, without having produced, as far as appears to this House, any remonstrance from his Majesty's ministers.

V. That it is the duty of his Majesty's ministers, in the present crisis, to advise his Majesty against entering into engagements which may prevent Great Britain from making a separate peace, whenever the interests of his Majesty and his people may render such a measure advisable, or which may countenance an opinion in Europe, that his Majesty is acting in concert with other powers, for the unjustifiable purpose of compelling the people of France to submit to a form of government not approved by that nation.

[1] Pitt's speech, July 10, 1794. "If the honourable gentleman meant that the object of the war, as expressed by ministers, was the destruction of the Jacobin government in France, he for his part should readily admit that it had been distinctly avowed: that it was still distinctly avowed, and could not be receded from: . . . The object was neither to be heightened by new grounds of success, nor relinquished from any temporary failures in the means of its attainment: and was one which he would never depart from as absolutely necessary to the security, and preservation of this country and her allies. It was not a war of extermination, as the honourable gentleman had called it, nor was its object the conquest of France, but the emancipation of that unhappy country: not the destruction of an enemy, but the overthrow of an usurpation hostile to this and every other government in Europe, and destructive, even to the last extremity of ruin, to France itself. It was impossible to forget that this was the object of the war, as distinctly avowed in his Majesty's speech, and recognised by the House in a variety of proceedings, taken after solemn debate and deliberate consideration: no man of common candour could therefore misrepresent it. Let the right honourable member suppose that all France was united in support of the present system, yet he would be forced to declare his detestation of it: nor could any argument lead him to believe, that a numerous and enlightened people willingly submitted to the most severe and sanguinary despotism that ever stained the page of history. It was impossible to put an end to this most furious tyranny, without destroying the present government of France. The manner in which the honourable gentleman had mentioned this country, and her allies by the appellation of despots, Mr. Pitt remarked, was a mode of speech so exactly copied from the French, that he was even surprised that the honourable gentleman used it, who, though sometimes their apologist, had often been obliged to reprobate their actions. Who were those that the honourable gentleman joined with the French in calling despots? The regular powers of Europe, Great Britain and her allies, united in one common cause, using the most vigorous endeavours to open to France the means to work its own safety, and for restoring order and prosperity to that distracted country."

Fox saw too that such a war would be a war of conquest. He measured the strength of that national sentiment, which the Government left out of its reckoning, and escaped Pitt's illusion that England was entering upon a short war to liberate the French nation from its tyrants. He knew, and Pitt lived long enough to learn the truth of an anticipation he derided in 1793, that a war to change the government of France would unite the people of France. Just as he rightly believed her pride and the stubbornness of her national sentiment to be England's stoutest protection against the assaults of those French principles of which Burke lived in mortal terror, so he held that the intervention of Europe in French affairs would bind France more closely than ever to the cause of the Revolution. What was said of Danton might truly be said of the invader, that he had but to stamp his foot and an armed France would spring from the ground. Pitt was flinging his armies against the power of nationality, the very power which was one day to break Napoleon. Fox saw this, at the moment Pitt was promising himself a short struggle and an easy victory in the springtime of the conflict which was to desolate Europe for twenty years. To avert that catastrophe, he faced in the second great crisis of his life, bereft now of his stoutest comrades, the myriad phantoms of menace, and brooding hate, and unforgiving fury, in which the darkness of the hour avenges itself on those who dare to see beyond it.

CHAPTER XI

FOX AND NATIONALISM

Burke's fear of Revolutionary principles. Fox's fear of the spirit of conquest and despotic repression. Fox anticipated the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle. The rise of the principle of nationality, a principle strange to eighteenth century diplomacy. Fox one of the few to understand the power of nationalism. The great issue between Fox and Burke. The same issue involved in the controversies of the nineteenth century. Fox saw that the conflict of ideas was not to be determined by the sword. Contrast with Burke and Windham. The consequences of Pitt's policy to England's place in Europe.

"I MUST say that in every country—in Austria, in Russia, in Prussia, in France, the *only legitimate Sovereign is the People*, and that only in proportion as Governments are the genuine Representatives of that Sovereign they are legitimate, and calculated to promote the happiness of the people. I must ever stand up in defence of those principles of liberty; of Whig principles, of those principles which brought about the Revolution of 1688, and which alone could justify it. Upon those principles the French, and not the English, were the proper persons to determine whether the Bourbons ought to reign in France. That question being determined by them properly or improperly, it matters not; Austria, Prussia and Great Britain acted in the most unjustifiable manner in attempting to constrain them."—Fox's Speech at the Meeting at the Shakespeare Tavern, October 10, 1800.

It is Fox's chief glory that in an age which blanched at

the falling of the Bastille it was the Declaration of Pilnitz that made him tremble for humanity. The one event spilt the first blood in a revolution which transfigured France, and made her liberation crimson. The other was the first murmur of the fear and arrogance of palaces, to be followed by the Brunswick Manifesto and the invasion of France. In the midst of these events Burke saw danger to civilisation nowhere but in the new and strange shape of a lawless political enthusiasm, which he pictured as Anarchy marching through Europe. What Fox feared was not this new-born hope of freedom and happiness, but the much older monster of conquest and ambition, which had already laid its grasp on distracted Poland, and now threatened with the same fate distracted France. If Burke foresaw the Empire, Fox foresaw the Holy Alliance, and the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle. The principles Burke hated and dreaded became ultimately the foundation of Western Liberalism. The dangers Fox dreaded have been a constant menace to national freedom. Burke triumphed; the nation listened and believed; he led a rabble, and won the unwelcome admiration of the King. In the Revolutionary wars of twenty years, which made and unmade states and frontiers, and left a black and riven Europe, first one side and then the other fought in the name of the right to settle the destinies of foreign nations. Fox was beaten and all but a small remnant of his life was spent in preaching to men whose ears were deaf. But for a century the Liberals of Europe have embraced the great doctrine of nationalism which he first maintained, and for the greater part of that century England chose as the settled basis of her policy the wisdom which the wise men of Fox's day rejected.

The French Revolution opened the century in which nationality as a principle won its place in political opinion. Fox championed that principle fearlessly in its first clash with the old world. It was largely his vivid sense of nationalism, his jealous belief that England had a very special civilisation of her own, that made him insist from

the first, that England's interests were bound up with the triumph of the doctrine that the right of a nation to chose and develop its own civilisation was sacred. He looked on the struggle of France to maintain her just rights against Europe, in the spirit in which Englishmen afterwards looked on the struggle of Europe against Napoleon, and English Liberals watched the struggle of the captive nations to break through the prison bars of the Metternich system. The spirit that made English Liberals welcome the independence of Greece, the regeneration of Italy, the emancipation of Belgium, and all the revolts of the nineteenth century against foreign rule, made Fox withstand the claim of Europe to force France back again under the heels of a fallen despotism. It is not curious that the doctrine he fought for fell strangely on the ears of polite Europe. No century had been quite so busy as the eighteenth century with the royal traffic in states and peoples. In that incessant hum, peoples might be thankful when they were instruments and not immediate plunder. When the Emperor wished to exchange Lorraine for Tuscany, or the Netherlands for Bavaria; when crowned heads arranged to divide Poland or Sweden; when dominions were rounded off here, and kingdoms severed there, kings and ministers might haggle and bargain and cheat, the populations that changed masters were so much random merchandise. Such an Areopagus was scarcely likely to give much of a hearing to the claim of Revolutionary France to rearrange her own affairs, a claim denied to old oligarchies now made by an insurgent people flouting thrones, and principalities, and powers. The partition of Poland was typical of the spirit of the eighteenth century. The making of Italy of that of the nineteenth. Fox belonged to the nineteenth. To understand in how chilling and ungenial an air he maintained the sentiments that half a century later were the sentiments of England, it is only necessary to read the letters of Grenville in 1792 and to see there not a continental despot but an English statesman, wishing well to the expedition on which the

austere judges of the Revolution had set out not merely to punish an upstart people but to rob the very sovereign for whose rights they had drawn the sword of social order.

The power of nationalism has been underrated in other calculations than those of the monarchs and of Pitt in 1792. It was underrated by Napoleon, who broke against it the most tremendous combination that man has ever handled, the greatest generals, the most splendid armies, the terrific vengeance of an outlawed people, and the flashing sword of the Revolution. It was underrated too by the Powers who rearranged the map of Europe in 1815. Greece, Italy, Hungary, the Balkan States, creations of the silent forces that confound the wisdom of Chancellors, have destroyed the plans and dispositions of Vienna. In those plans Metternich carried out the very scheme Fox dreaded in 1792. The settlements of Vienna were designed to imprison all the liberal and national enthusiasms of Empire behind a system which gave every autocratic ruler a direct interest in maintaining Austrian rule over unwilling foreigners. One by one those settlements have almost disappeared. Metternich might have guessed that he was rebuilding Europe on a foundation of sand, for he had seen something of the power of national sentiment in the Napoleonic wars. First Napoleon, and then the Allies had appealed to that sentiment in Italy. To each there had been a quick response. Metternich was attempting to re-establish Austrian power by suppressing the very sentiment the allies had invoked against Napoleon, and the attempt to suffocate nationalism in Italy could not succeed permanently. Napoleon again could have seen in the behaviour of threatened France, a warning against his provocations to the national spirit in Spain, Switzerland, and the Tyrol. But there was little to warn men in 1792. Fox was laughed at when he argued that to threaten France was to unite her, and that to make war on her to restore a hated government would call out unsuspected energies of resistance. Pitt thought his task was easy. In Holland there had been no

national resistance when first France, and then England and Prussia, had interfered in her affairs. It may indeed be doubted whether any other continental power than France could in 1792 and 1793 have flung back seven invading armies, and saved her soil from the foreigner. By a happy fortune the Revolution had broken out in the one nation which could, in the surroundings of 1789, have survived it. Rousseau, who had given to men and women the surging and tumultuous hopes of a new order of happiness and social justice, had touched patriotism with a new passion, and made France what she had never been before to the commonest of her children. Europe divined little of this when she set her armies in array against Revolutionary France. She was grappling with the unknown. Fox was one of the few who knew the strength of that passion, whose first triumph over the Coalition he watched in the autumn of 1792 with the rapture with which Liberals of a later generation watched the play and sweep of the forces that crumpled and annulled elsewhere in Europe the forged title-deeds of conquest.

It is important in order to appreciate the great principles which Fox maintained in the Revolutionary war to put on one side the sinister elements of ambition and greed and to suppose that every monarch in Europe was a Burke acting with a single eye to the public good, and inspired only by those unreasoning but sublime appeals, to which Burke taught so much that was good as well as so much that was insincere in his own country to vibrate. When the ground is cleared, it is easier to distinguish the principles that were in conflict. It then becomes apparent that the argument Fox resisted so strenuously is precisely the argument on which the rights of nationality have been challenged in the great controversies of the nineteenth century. In Burke's eyes the Revolution was a crime against a civilisation which Europe was bound to protect. France was claiming the right to build a state on new principles fatal to her own happiness, and intolerable to

her neighbours who worshipped the jealous gods of monarchy, religion and established order. The Revolution was an atrocity, which outraged every living king, from St. James's to St. Petersburg. The war between Europe and France was in this view a civil war. France was an outlaw, and the armies of Europe were the implacable Eumenides, hunting a parricide government. Until that punishment was complete and the overthrown orders restored, the stable civilisation of Europe was in danger. The war was waged to oblige France to conform to a civilisation from which she had fallen away, to her own misery and shame. It is the basis of this argument that the internal civilisation of a state is a proper subject for the interference and control of other nations, who believe their own to be better.

There was the same great conflict of ideas in French politics. The Revolution opened with declarations of the most scrupulous respect for the rights and sensibilities of nations. By the Fourth Article of the decree on peace and war, the Constituent Assembly had renounced in May 1790 all ideas of conquest, and all designs of interference with the liberty of any people. To this mood there succeeded the fiery propagandism of the Girondins, the wild deliriums of universal liberation, the mischievous fantasies of men like Brissot who, in M. Aulard's language, "municipalisait l'Europe," a phrase that is not inappropriate to Burke. Robespierre, who afterwards defended this view of foreign relations against Danton, warned Brissot at that time that no one liked armed missionaries and that the first impulse of nature was to treat them as enemies.[1] The best expression of liberal sentiment comes from a man whose flexible conscience learnt to condone wholesale conquest: it is to be found in Talleyrand's paper of November 1792, published by Dr. Robinet among the "pièces justificatives" to his *Danton Émigré*. "On a appris, enfin, que la véritable primatie, la seule utile et raisonnable, la seule qui convienne

[1] Aulard, Études et leçons sur la Révolution française. "La diplomatie du premier comité de salut public."

à des hommes libres et éclairés, est d'être mâitre chez soi et de n'avoir jamais la ridicule et funeste prétention de l'être chez les autres." Burke's spirit was to be seen in the champions of armed propaganda and also in the apologists later of Napoleon's aggrandisement. Napoleon was conquering, but it was the triumph of a crusade; he was crushing the independence of other peoples, but he was giving them a set of infinitely better laws and institutions than they had ever known. His armies swept through Europe, but though they carried fire and sword from country to country, they carried too the energies of a just and sublime civilisation, the arts of a new and diviner government. Burke wished England to be the soldier of civilisation, and for him civilisation was the old order. The Burkes of French democracy wished France to be the soldier of civilisation, and for them civilisation meant the new order.

What again was the apology for the Metternich system but the same argument, that the foreign civilisation imposed on Austria's dominions was better than any national civilisation the inhabitants of those dominions could create? Metternich and the statesmen and diplomatists of Europe who were accessories to his policy in 1815, and those who defended his system, in the agitations and tumults in which it was at last to perish, did not admit that they were wantonly repressing freedom and just aspirations. They argued that they were taking the best measures for the happiness of the very populations who fancied themselves the ill-used victims of dispositions that were in truth benevolent. They would have said in Burke's language that their subjects had a manly, regulated liberty, that civilisation was an order they must learn to accept and not try to create; that their headstrong impulses would bring infinite suffering upon themselves, if they were not governed as subject peoples: they could only really be free when they were kept in leading strings. There is nothing in the world so unselfish as tyranny.

There will always be men who are disposed to postpone

national freedom to the interests of material order, and who shut their eyes to the boundaries of nationality, in their passion to stamp a particular character on unwilling peoples. Their language in one century was the language of a mystic crusade, bringing the wrath of Heaven upon a rebellious nation; in another the less glittering tones of pseudo-scientific prose, the arguments of men to whom all government is a function of police, and the life of a nation a mere symmetry of administrative excellence and precision. A hundred years after Burke, there have been men who thought they had found a lye to wash out all the hues and colours that distinguish nations. To such natures the only test is the mechanical, and judged superficially by that test many a nationalist movement is disappointing enough. It is to the credit of the Liberals of 1848 that they answered such arguments boldly with the belief that self-government is better than good government. It is the essence of the Liberal temperament that it believes a freedom which goes in rags to be preferable to all the gracious luxuries of slavery; and that it holds the varieties and discrepancies of civilisation to be better for mankind than a prim monotony of drilled perfection. It would be wrong to underrate the obstacles of prejudice and fear, the memories of the Revolutionary wars which the Liberals of the nineteenth century had to overcome, when they maintained that the Niagara of national sentiment should be used to drive the wheels and engines of civilisation, against the argument that those engines were designed for no other purpose than to keep that sentiment under. But what were their difficulties compared with those Fox faced in 1792? His generation knew nothing of the moral forces of this new element in politics. The Liberals of 1848 had behind them a tradition of popular reform, and the spectre of democracy had lost half its terrors. The Whigs of 1792 were not even agreed that any measure of Parliamentary reform was desirable. The Liberals of 1848 had seen one great act of national emancipation carried out by the joint efforts of three European Powers in a distant

sea. In 1792 there had been no people in Europe released from foreign rule to accustom men's minds to the idea of nationality; the European monarchs were not allies but enemies of the claim of France, and the country where the experiment was to be tried was not distant, but at her very doors. In 1848 there was no immediate menace to the interests of any English class, and England could breathe freely whilst she played the part of the friend of freedom. In 1792 the governing classes of England saw their own doom in the resounding ruin of the old order in France, and behind the figure of Burke with his hand uplifted to heaven there mustered and trembled all the creeping things in politics, their eyes fixed on their quit-rents and their monopolies, and all the treasures and luxuries of earth.

It was an easy thing again for Wordsworth to write the indignation of a high-minded Spaniard in 1810, when Napoleon said he was conquering Spain for her good: it was not an easy thing for Fox to write the indignation of a high-minded Frenchman in 1792 when Burke called on Europe to conquer her for her good. The high-minded Spaniard was our ally; the high-minded Frenchman was our enemy. The civilisation of the high-minded Spaniard was outwardly order; the civilisation of the high-minded Frenchman was outwardly disorder. On the Duke of Brunswick's banners there gleamed all the emblems the rulers of England loved; on Napoleon's all the emblems they hated. The bravery that withstood Napoleon when he seemed invincible is the solitary good thing in a generation of political disaster to England. To understand Fox's bravery in 1793 we must forget all that we know now of the Revolution, the bad and brittle system Burke hoped to restore, and the splendid tenacity of France, and remember alone that the governing classes of England not only longed to destroy the Revolution but thought that task simple. We know to-day that there was no instance in which the claim to control a foreign nation was less justified, if judged by the material tests of order and happiness, than the instance in which

Burke urged that claim, and that there was no instance in which there was so much to fortify a claim, which Liberals can never acknowledge, as in the case of Napoleon's aggressions; the England of Fox's generation forgot the background in the blood and fire that they saw before them. Unless all these things are kept in mind, it is impossible to appreciate the clear-eyed courage with which Fox maintained that it mattered not whether the internal civilisation of France was good or bad; it was the national civilisation of France, and it was therefore the highest interest of Europe to hold it sacred.[1] There have been men enough since 1792 to sneer at respect for nationality as a mere ribbon of idle and trivial sentiment. Fox had to withstand not merely selfishness or ambition or a thin-lipped cynicism but the Protean shapes of a panic so tremendous that conquest, partition, the breaking of treaties, and infinite war were looked upon even by honest men as mere scarecrows compared with the danger that threatened humanity if France was left to make her Revolution unmolested.

In such an atmosphere of terror it needed no little discernment to understand that a challenged civilisation must trust to something else than the sword to protect itself from a moral invasion of ideas. Burke and Windham thought that England must wage a war *à l'outrance* on the ideas of the Revolution. Fox saw that whatever else the sword could decide, it could not decide the justice or the social beneficence or the endurance of the Revolutionary civilisation, any more than the pillory or the dungeon could determine where truth lay in the quarrels of doctrine. The Revolution, as Burke saw, in so far as it summed up new hopes and notions of justice, was not local just because it was spiritual. That was the reason, Burke argued, for treating it by the concerted methods of a European police. Fox drew the

[1] "He thought the present state of government in France anything rather than an object of imitation; but he maintained as a principle inviolable that the government of every independent state was to be settled by those who were to live under it, and not by foreign force."—Feb. 1, 1793. *Speeches*, vol. v. p. 21.

profounder moral that for this reason it was all the more important to treat it as an opinion which could only be beaten out of the field, by creating a public opinion which would prefer something else. On this reasoning the excesses of the Revolution were an argument against making war upon it, for the more unattractive its ideas the less was the danger of moral contagion. Burke thought those very excesses an argument for war. The best comment on Fox's belief was the readiness with which the English nation accepted out of sheer horror the iniquitous oppression Pitt and Dundas instituted in England and Scotland. No sword could avert the ideas of the Revolution from England half as successfully as the reflected glare of the red skies of Paris.

In the panic of 1793, men traced all the anarchy of France to the first concessions made by the king, and they argued that, to protect civilisation, its champions must stop all reform, and attack with carbine and bludgeon the ideas that spread confusion. Fox argued that the true protection was to be found in competing with those ideas for popular allegiance. He saw, that is, in the Revolution, a reason for granting, not for withholding reforms just because he saw that if the Revolution made a universal appeal, the rulers of Europe must give their peoples a civilisation that they cared to preserve, more precious in their eyes than all the prospects the Revolution offered. To make war upon the Revolution was not to convince men that its ideas were illusory, to redress their grievances was to convince them that their own laws were worth preserving. If the Revolution was evil, it was to be kept from other countries by opposing to it the spiritual energies of a free people interested in maintaining a civilisation they were proud to call their own. If it was attractive it was important to teach the nation that peoples had as much reason as their rulers to dread it. Napoleon's profligate ambition which attacked the things which the people of Spain prized, and not only their rulers, ultimately raised up against his military aggression the very barrier which Fox saw rightly to be

the only barrier against the moral invasions of the Revolution. The essence of this argument was a profound belief that the highest human interests demanded that the competition of the ideas of civilisation should be peaceful and not warlike. Fox saw that the necessities and the moral standards of humanity, and not the violence of Revolutionary or reactionary warrior would decide where either civilisation should prevail. This conspicuously modern idea has often vanished from men's minds, when they cast about for some high principle on which to condone or defend actions that were due to the much less deliberate impulses of passion and revenge. The wars of the French Revolution showed how truly Fox had judged. Of all the Powers that drew the sword on France in 1792, the only one that gained a single advantage to compensate the losses of that struggle acted precisely on Fox's principle. When Stein abolished serfdom in Prussia, the motive power behind that reform was the appreciation of the great truth that Prussia must have a civilisation which the ordinary Prussian thought it worth while to defend. The sword itself did not save a single community from the moral invasion Burke dreaded. Spain resisted that invasion when it became aggression, because Napoleon attacked something the people of Spain cherished. Prussia ultimately resisted it because Stein gave the people of Prussia something they cherished. Belgium chose French government and persisted in that choice right through the Revolutionary wars, just because the Belgians had much more reason to like French civilisation than Austrian. Prussia left the Code Napoléon in the Rhenish Provinces in 1814 just because it was better and more congenial to the population than the best institutions Prussia could give them. Reform, so far from capitulating to the Revolution, was the only way of resisting it.

It may be argued that the very failure of Burke's project proved the correctness of his principle, that the civilisation of revolutionary France was infinitely better than the civilisation of feudal Europe, that the Revolutionary wars

spread what was the higher civilisation, and that war therefore did make the award, different though that award was from what Burke expected, between two civilisations. This is surely a superficial view. What made Italy, Belgium, and Greece recover their freedom was the fact that the peoples of Italy, Belgium, and Greece found a civilisation they preferred to the civilisation they had been forced to live under. What made the cause of the Revolution triumph in France after the Restoration, was the fact that its civilisation satisfied, whilst the restored civilisation did not satisfy the aspirations of the people. It was spontaneous choice and not compulsion that ultimately settled these questions. Amongst free peoples, or peoples capable of freedom, it is that moral supremacy which decides in the long-run whether a particular nation chooses one civilisation or another. The France of Rousseau or Voltaire had moral inspirations for Europe, not less vivid or lasting than those of the France of Napoleon. It is not her prowess on the battlefield that has given France her proud eminence in great causes. She had led the mind of Europe long before the Jacobin armies overran her frontiers, and the first rapture excited by 1789 is the best support of Mirabeau's argument, that a peaceful revolution would spread democracy more than any war.

There was another important respect in which Fox saw far more clearly than did most of his contemporaries into the consequences of Pitt's policy. He hated and fought the whole plan of making war on the Revolution, instead of on the aggressions of France, by means of subsidised coalitions, because he knew that by that plan England was definitely ranged, for a much longer period than most men imagined, against freedom, not only in France but in Europe. Pitt, who had Turgot's zeal for improvement, had no attachment to freedom, and he looked upon foreign politics as the art of carrying on the government of Europe, just as he looked upon domestic politics as the art of carrying on the government of England, with the minimum of friction or disturbance, or of

concrete hardship to the governed. Under Pitt's policy England's cause in Europe was essentially the cause of dynasties, and only casually and rarely the cause of freedom. Fox wished it to be the cause of freedom, and only the cause of dynasties when dynasties were protecting freedom. It was the result of the course that Pitt followed that for thirty years England pursued a policy in Europe of which it is not an unfair description to say, that the chief glory of her foreign policy since has consisted in reversing it. The first consequence of Pitt's policy and Pitt's subsidies was the second partition of Poland, and there was a bitter truth in Fox's satire that in crushing Kosciusko the King of Prussia was carrying out the spirit of the policy to which Pitt committed England.[1] Pitt himself had as little respect as the King of Prussia for the rights or the sensibilities of peoples. He proposed without the slightest provocation to destroy the Republic of Genoa and to add Genoa to the swollen possessions of the Hapsburgs, and, when this design was abandoned from fear of Russian jealousy, the annexation of Genoa to Sardinia was substituted for it. He proposed to place Belgium against its will under Holland, and this scheme was prized by his successors as one of the chief treasures of his statesmanship. In all his dispositions for battle against the Revolution and against Napoleon, he proceeded on the assumption that the peoples of Europe might be neglected, if the sovereigns of Europe could be bribed or threatened into war, and that the cause of social order was the cause of dynastic expansion.

The first fruits of this policy were seen after 1814. It had been Pitt's leading idea that nothing was a crime if it aggrandised Austria as a rival to France. After 1814 the foreign policy of England was the foreign policy of Austria, the foreign policy of the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle, and the rehabilitation of precarious tyranny. Plunder, and robbery, and the breaking of faith were not only condoned but encouraged, where they were the acts of men who had some

[1] See Fox's *Speeches*, vol. v. p. 404.

immediate interest in maintaining their inheritance or their lawless acquisitions against the murmuring hopes of freedom. An English fleet helped to batter down the will of Norway and to compel her to take Bernadotte as her master. In Hanover torture and the wheel were restored without a protest. At Madrid, at Naples, and at Turin, the English Minister was Metternich's loyal ally, in his attempt to suffocate constitutional government and to expand the authority of Austria. When the Bourbon convolvulus stretched once more round the bruised ambitions of constitutional freedom in Naples and in Spain, no English Minister intervened either at Naples, where intervention was easy, or at Madrid, where it was difficult, to protect populations from the worst effects of that blighting and deadly embrace. Encouraged by Austria, and not discouraged by England, the Ferdinands set to work with blithe alacrity to destroy the Constitutions that had been promised to their subjects, whilst English diplomacy was used, happily in vain, to induce Sardinia to accept Metternich's dangerous alliance. The policy on which England and Austria agreed in 1814 was Pitt's policy of making Europe a continent of garrisons. It was in Fox's spirit that a generation later English diplomatists were all eager to make Europe a continent of peoples.

CHAPTER XII

FOX AND THE FRENCH WAR

Pitt's policy outwardly contradictory, but essentially consistent. He thought restoration of monarchy meant the reduction of French power. Fox opposes the policy as—(1) unjust interference, (2) aggrandising France. Peace of Amiens. Difference between Fox and Pitt in second war. Pitt looks to the East and Fox to Europe. The great Coalition and Austerlitz. Fox and Windham on military system. Last effort to make peace with France. Charges against Fox's patriotism.

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l they had made private overtures

[1] See Fox

through Maret to the English Government. Yet the King's speech began with a declaration, "we are engaged in a contest on the issues of which depend the maintenance of our constitution, laws, and religion, and the security of all civil society." The war was at this stage a war against revolutionary principles in France. Fox was beaten by two hundred and seventy-nine to fifty-nine votes in his amendment to the address, "To state the determination of this House to support his Majesty in the measures necessary to maintain the honour and independence of the Crown, and to provide for the defence and safety of the nation: but at the same time to advise his Majesty to take the earliest means of concluding a peace with the French nation, on such terms as it may be reasonable and prudent for us to insist on. That whenever such terms can be obtained we trust that no obstacle to the acceptance of them will arise from any considerations respecting the form or nature of the Government which may prevail in France." By December 1795 the Government had completely changed its tone, and was ready to listen to proposals, and by October 1796, (after the break-down of some indirect negotiations with Barthélemy,) it announced that it had actually taken steps for a negotiation. Yet in the interval between 1794 and 1796 nothing had happened to make it easier or safer to treat: France was back again in Belgium, her armies had won Holland and the mountain passes of Spain and Piedmont, and Prussia had fallen away from the Coalition. The negotiations collapsed, and when next a proposal came from France in 1799 it was rejected, on the ground that it came from a revolutionary Government, though it was precisely with the same Government that the Peace of Amiens was signed the following year.

But behind all these contradictions there was a perfectly consistent policy. Pitt wanted to reduce France to her original limits; and though he had none of Burke's feelings about an unanointed Republic, he made the re-establishment of monarchy his end, because he came to identify that

re-establishment with the restoration of the old limits of France. After seven years of war for this object, Pitt was obliged to relinquish it and to support a peace that left France infinitely more powerful than she was in 1793 or 1794, when he talked of a war of extermination. But until that day of exhaustion came he fought for his one end, the evacuation of Belgium, by every means in his power. He used the ambitions and the rapacities of the large states, and the weakness of the small. He stimulated and tried to direct the territorial appetites of Austria; he flung subsidies to the Emperor and to Prussia; he bullied Denmark, Tuscany, and Genoa; he threatened Switzerland; he was ready to help the émigrés in recovering their privileges, or to help the Powers to appropriate French territory.[1] The Quiberon expedition and its sequel were to Fox an act of meanness and folly, to Burke an act of treachery, to Pitt they were merely an experiment. Pitt thought that an alliance with the Royalists and Constitutionalists might help him to re-establish monarchy in France: when he found the émigrés' support worthless, and their pretensions exorbitant, he abandoned the whole project of making their cause his own. Fox saw in that alliance an unmistakable sign that our war was a war of internal interference; Burke saw in it a sacred pledge to the men whose lost rights he wished to see restored. To Pitt it was neither of these things; it was one of various methods of attacking France, and a method to be employed without adopting all the implications of Burke's fiery spirit of crusade, or promising the émigrés restitution in a France still intact.

As he used his material in France or in Europe, so Pitt used and moulded his material at home. The more the public was terrified by the idea of domestic sedition, the more resolute for war was its temper. The repression of domestic liberty was in this sense a measure of defence; it inflamed

[1] It was this energy in bribery that made France regard England as *l'âme damnée* of the Coalition. Between March and September 1793 Pitt made ten different treaties.

the sense of danger, and thereby invigorated the passion for war. Till war came Burke's wild appeals were an embarrassment, for Pitt still hoped to preserve peace. When war had broken out, Pitt saw in the spirit Burke had roused the very energy that he wanted to sustain the national determination. His oracles were not the oracles of Burke, but he was well content to have at his back a people who accepted them. There came a time when the pressure of want, and the continual prospect of defeat on the continent, and the collapse of all Pitt's prophecies of rapid triumph created a demand for peace. Pitt, more indefatigable than the public, found it necessary to humour the popular temper by talking of his readiness to negotiate, but in his conduct of the negotiations his chief care was to make the right impression on the public mind at home. He used the first negotiations through Malmesbury to discover the true condition of things in France, and to convince his countrymen that France was still incurably warlike. In 1795 he thought the recovery of Belgium still possible, and that all he had to do was to rekindle the popular enthusiasm at home, which misfortune had gone far to extinguish. In 1796 the difficulty was no longer the state of the popular mind at home. The exhaustion of England seemed complete, and Pitt brought himself to face the necessity of ceding Belgium. Pitt's policy is therefore quite consistent and intelligible. It was summed up in his own quotation,

> "Potuit quæ plurima virtus
> Esse, fuit: toto certatum est corpore regni."

Pitt believed that it was fatal to England to leave France in possession of Belgium,[1] a contingency English statesmen had always regarded as a supreme danger. To restore France to her frontiers was the sovereign end of his policy; the means to that end were the restoration of monarchy, the co-operation of allies whose minds were only occupied

[1] The ultimate settlement of the question—the neutralisation of Belgium—was foreshadowed by Talleyrand.

with their several ambitions, the intimidation, and if necessary the extermination of small states, the creation at home of a stubborn and merciless temper. France must be fought until she was beaten or England was exhausted. As long as one Power, and that the great maritime Power, kept up the struggle, France was still mortal. In 1796, and again in 1801, he thought England was too much exhausted to continue the struggle. The various discrepancies in Pitt's own account of his policy, and the contradictory things he did are thus all reconciled in one supreme purpose; they all belong to the tenacity with which he clung to a project he held to be indispensable to the national safety. He failed, because France was more resolute than he thought, and because he could only bring into the field against her national enthusiasm the forces of a worn-out system, and the arms of sovereigns incapable of combining in any cause but that of plunder.

To Fox this spirit of a war against the Revolutionary principles, the spirit Burke inflamed by his ceaseless imprecations on democracy, and Pitt encouraged in his declarations in Parliament, was the mortal enemy of his own country. The claim to control the internal arrangements of France he regarded as unjust, fatal to all sound policy, and in particular most menacing to English interests. If that claim were once acknowledged in the case of France, what was there to prevent its application to the case of England? If England once sanctioned the principle on which the continental sovereigns made war on France, she would ally herself definitely with a concerted effort to suppress reform, and no one of Fox's temperament or sympathies could consider such a contingency as anything but a catastrophe for his country. This was the dominant issue in Fox's mind in the war that began in 1792, and ended in 1800, for amidst all the miscellaneous motives that crowded into the popular enthusiasm for war, such as the hopes of spoil and the desire to retaliate on the aggressions of 1780, the passion for a righteous crusade had a distinctness and a

grandeur of its own. It was against this principle, which he regarded as another expression of the general spirit of tyranny, that exhibited itself in the domestic legislation of 1794, that Fox fought with the vehemence he displayed in combating the force of reaction in other fields. It was the object of his several motions from 1792 to 1797, to establish the principle that the form of government in France should not be an obstacle to peace. The importance he attached to this principle has been shown in a previous chapter, but it is worth while to reproduce two extracts from his speeches.

"In his mind, a war against opinions was in no one instance, and could not be, either just or pardonable. A war of self-defence against acts he could understand, he could explain, and he could justify; but no war against opinions could be supported by reason or by justice: it was drawing the sword of the inquisition. How could we blame all those abominable acts of bloodshed and torture, which had been committed from time to time under the specious name of religion, when we ourselves had the presumption to wage a similar war? Who would say, that all the blood that had been spilt from the fury of religious enthusiasm, might not have been made to flow from the pure but misguided motive of correcting opinions, when we ourselves thus dared to dip our hands in the blood of our fellow-creatures, on the mere pretext of correcting the errors of opinion? We must change all the doctrines that we had been taught to cherish about religious persecution and intolerance; we must begin to venerate the authors of the holy inquisition, and consider them as pious and pure men, who committed their murders for the beneficent purpose of correcting the heresies, which they considered as so abominable, and restoring the blessings of what they conceived to be the only true system of christianity. In the same manner, the present war against opinions was to be entitled to our esteem, and its authors to be venerated for their morality. In this war they also were great conquerors;

they had lost towns, cities, nay kingdoms, they had squandered a hundred millions of money, they had lost one hundred thousand men, they had lost their allies, they had lost the cause of the emigrants, they had lost the throne to the family of the Bourbons,—but they had gained a set of rather better opinions to France."[1]

"Sir, there are many persons who think and lament that the peace is a glorious one for France. If the peace be glorious for France, without being inglorious to England, it will not give me any concern that it is so. Upon this point, the feelings and opinions of men must depend in a great measure upon their conceptions of the causes of the war. If one of the objects of the war was the restoration of the antient despotism of France, than which I defy any man to produce in the history of the world a more accursed one; if, I say, that was one of the objects of the war, why then, I say, it is to me an additional recommendation of the peace, that it has been obtained without the accomplishment of such an object. My undisguised opinion is, that if the coalition for the restoration of the Bourbons had succeeded, the consequences would have been amongst all the kings of Europe a perpetual guarantee against all people who might be oppressed by any of them in any part of the world. All countries, therefore, must be benefited by the failure of such a project, but none more so than Great Britain. To the people of this country the consequences would have been fatal. Refer to the page of history. Had the coalition in the reign of Charles I. established such a guarantee, would the liberties of the people have been preserved against the house of Stuart, or would Hampden have gained the immortal victory he did? To come lower down: had such a guarantee existed in later times, would the Revolution of 1688 have been able to maintain itself? I say, therefore, that there could not have been any greater misfortune to the world than the success of that coalition for restoring the Bourbons to the crown of France."[2]

[1] *Speeches*, vol. v. p. 496.

[2] *Ibid.* vol. vi. p. 459.

But Fox was not only fighting for the recognition of the right of a nation to determine its own form of government. He was fighting, as he believed, for the defence of England against France. To talk of Fox as the victim of an anti-patriotic bias and a statesman who always thought his country in the wrong, is to ignore all his speeches on the French war. No man spoke more bitterly of the crimes of France. A statesman who described the state of France from 1792 to 1795 as a state of tyranny intolerable beyond that of any, perhaps, that ever was experienced in the history of man, can scarcely be accused of passing lightly over the darker side of the Revolution. As for French aggrandisement abroad, Fox denounced it with a force and sincerity that men who condoned the seizure of Poland could only simulate.

"Sir, in all this, I am not justifying the French—I am not striving to absolve them from blame, either in their internal or external policy. I think, on the contrary, that their successive rulers have been as bad and as execrable, in various instances, as any of the most despotic and unprincipled governments that the world ever saw. I think it impossible, Sir, that it should have been otherwise. It was not to be expected that the French, when once engaged in foreign wars, should not endeavour to spread destruction around them, and to form plans of aggrandizement and plunder on every side. Men bred in the school of the house of Bourbon could not be expected to act otherwise. They could not have lived so long under their antient masters, without imbibing the restless ambition, the perfidy, and the insatiable spirit of the race. They have imitated the practice of their great prototype, and, through their whole career of mischief and of crimes, have done no more than servilely trace the steps of their own Louis XIV. If they have overrun countries and ravaged them, they have done it upon Bourbon principles. If they have ruined and dethroned sovereigns, it is entirely after the Bourbon manner. If they have even fraternised with the people of foreign countries,

and pretended to make their cause their own, they have only faithfully followed the Bourbon example. They have constantly had Louis, the grand monarque, in their eye. But it may be said, that this example was long ago, and that we ought not to refer to a period so distant. True, it is a distant period as applied to the man, but not so to the principle. The principle was never extinct; nor has its operation been suspended in France, except, perhaps, for a short interval, during the administration of Cardinal Fleury; and my complaint against the republic of France is, not that she has generated new crimes, not that she has promulgated new mischief, but that she has adopted and acted upon the principles which have been so fatal to Europe, under the practice of the house of Bourbon."[1]

But what was the best way of defending English interests? Fox was afraid, as he said himself, of French power, but not of French principles. Windham, who joined the Cabinet in 1794, was much more afraid of French principles than of French power.[2] Pitt saw all the advantages to be gained from making the war a struggle with the Revolutionary order in France. He was proscribing the French Government, and he was enlisting all the emotions of horror and indignation that Jacobinism had excited in the population at home. To Fox this course was objectionable, not only on general grounds, but also because it united France; it was a war, not on her possessions, but on her independence, challenging not merely her ambition or her pride, but the very instinct of self-preservation. It was at the moment of France's greatest danger, that the military power was

[1] *Speeches*, vol. vi. p. 391 (Feb 3, 1800).

[2] "In his idea, the conquest of Britain by Louis XVI. would by no means have been a calamity equal to the propagation of French principles. In the one case, our persons might perhaps have been safe; all morality, order, and religion, would be totally overthrown in the other. This would be a war *pro aris et focis* to the greatest extent."—*Windham's Speeches*, vol. i. p. 231 (Feb. 1, 1793).

born which was afterwards used so disastrously for Europe.[1]

Fox always held that France had been made a great military nation by her enemies, who had called out the tremendous energies of a national resistance.[2] If Europe threw France on her own resources, France would win. And though Fox sometimes mistook the temper of the French Government, he measured much more justly than Pitt her strength and endurance, and the increase of wealth the Revolution brought. Pitt himself was exceedingly well-informed by his spies, but he preferred to believe the Royalists, who were always predicting a counter-revolution in France, or the paralysis or the repentance of the French people. Fox protested very emphatically against the policy of co-operating with the allies as champions of social order. He argued that English interests were not identical with the interests of the other powers, and he saw that the European

[1] 1793, 23 Août. Décret of Convention. Art. 1. Dès ce moment jusqu'a celui ou les ennemis auront été chassés du territoire de la république, tous les Francais sont en réquisition permanent pour le service des armés.

Les jeunes gens iront au combat; les hommes mariés forgeront les armes et transporteront les subsistances; les femmes feront des tentes, des habits, et serviront dans les hopitaux; les enfants malleront le vieux linge en charpie; les viellards se feront porter sur les places publiques pour exciter le courage des guerriers, la haine des rois, et le dévoument à la république.

[2] "The noble lord next alludes to the principles and power of France. For my own part, I never had much dread of French principles, though I certainly have no slight apprehension of French power. Of the influence of France upon the continent, I am as sensible as any man can be; but this is an effect which I do not impute to the peace but to the war. It is the right honourable gentleman himself who has been the greatest curse of the country by this aggrandisement of France. To France we may apply what that gentleman applied formerly on another occasion—we may say,

Me Tenedon, Chrysenque, et Cyllan Apollinis urbes,
Et Scyron cepisse.

He is the great prominent cause of all this greatness of the French republic. How did we come into this situation? By maintaining a war upon grounds originally unjust. It was this that excited a spirit of proud independence on the part of the enemy: it was this that lent him such resistless vigour: it was this that gave them energy and spirit, that roused them to such efforts, that inspired them with a patriotism and a zeal which no opposition could check, and no resistance subdue."—*Speeches*, vol. vi. p. 463 (Nov. 3, 1801).

sovereigns were very indifferent guardians of public right. He showed that they could not protect their own misgoverned possessions, Belgium and Italy, that their private schemes were far dearer to them than any common purpose of a European coalition, and that to take them into partnership in a crusade was to assume that governments, whose first preoccupation was the partition of Poland, had all Burke's austere and disinterested reverence for the cause of order and religion.

For the consequences of such a coalition he was terrified, and justly, as the events showed. A little more than a year after the declaration of war, Pitt had to confess, in asking the House of Commons to agree to a subsidy of £2,500,000 to the King of Prussia, that nothing short of bribery would keep this zealous champion of social order and public right in the field against the Revolution. When the money had been paid, the King of Prussia took advantage of an ambiguous expression in the treaty to keep the troops, for whose hire he had been paid, inactive on the Upper Rhine, and, not a month after the transaction had been completed, he marched those troops, that were meant to crush France, to Warsaw, to crush Kosciusko, and make sure that he would get his fair share in the second division of Poland. In two years from the outbreak of the war, Prussia had not only deserted the Coalition, but concluded a treaty with the outlawed French Government, in which she arranged to hand over certain of her provinces west of the Rhine. From that day down to the signing of the Peace of Amiens, Prussia took no part in the war against France, and she was once actually at war with England herself as one of the Northern Powers concerned in the disputes of 1801. In August 1796 she made a general treaty with France providing for the cession of the left bank of the Rhine. Pitt had allied himself with Prussia to protect the cause of order from France; the only effect of that alliance down to the Peace of Amiens was to make it rather easier for Prussia to complete her flagitious designs of robbery

in Poland. It was on that object that the British subsidy was spent.

How did Pitt's policy fare in the case of the second great ally? Pitt was ready, not merely to ally England with Austria for the protection of order, but to aggrandise Austria by allowing her to receive annexations in Northern France, as well as Alsace, and in 1793 when the Allies began a war of conquest Pitt allowed Austria to treat Condé as Austrian territory. By 1794 Austria, in spite of English remonstrances, had abandoned the Netherlands, the only part of Austrian territory which England had any interest in helping to defend. Six months later, Austria had withdrawn her troops behind the Rhine, and England had to evacuate Holland, and by 1795 Austria would certainly have relinquished the struggle if she had not been stimulated by financial aid from Great Britain, and by the Russian offer of a large share in the spoils of Poland. It had been the assumption of Pitt's policy that Austria and Prussia had an equal interest with Great Britain in the war against the Revolution. Three years after the war broke out, neither of those Powers wished to fight France, and the reason that induced one of them to keep the field was not any sense of danger from France and French principles, but the attraction of robbery in the East. Austria remained at war, but in spite of the Archduke Charles' great victory over Jourdain in August 1796, she agreed the next year, after Napoleon's successes in Italy, to make the Treaty of Campo Formio with France. That Treaty is the best comment on Pitt's policy of subsidising Austria and Prussia. Austria ceded her possessions in the Netherlands, though in 1796 England had broken off negotiations with France on the ground that she could not in fairness to Austria agree to the French demand for Belgium. She was a willing accomplice in as iniquitous a transaction as Napoleon ever committed in the bargain over Venice; she showed that the Power Pitt wished to aggrandise as the defender of the rights of Europe, had not enough public spirit to act as the defender

of the interests of Germany. An Emperor who sacrificed Germany to Austria was scarcely likely to postpone Austria's interests to those of Europe. Austria and Prussia had already shown that they were not merely willing but eager to divide the territory of European states as a more profitable occupation than fighting France. The Treaty of Campo Formio was a Treaty in which Austria divided with France herself the spoil of Napoleon's victories.

The same cause led to the collapse of the next great concerted movement against France, the combination between England, Russia, and Austria in 1799. The first moment of success showed that whereas Russia wished to restore the original Governments in Italy, Austria was only thinking of extending her dominions. This difference paralysed the efforts of the allies, and made it impossible for Suvoroff to take advantage of the victory of the Trebia, which left France more exposed to attack than she had been since 1793. The result was a compromise agreed to between Russia, England, and Austria. As soon as the French armies were destroyed, Austria was to reduce the Italian fortresses; the Russians and Austrians were to conquer Switzerland and to invade France, and a combined British and Russian force was to attack Holland. This plan was dislocated at the last moment by Austria, who resumed her original scheme of trying to retake Belgium, in order to exchange it for Bavaria, and the campaign of the summer and autumn was ruined by a selfishness on her part which nearly amounted to treachery. Russia, the most zealous in the scheme of 1799, fell away, only to learn in the descent on Holland that the Duke of York's incapacity was almost as embarrassing as Austria's bad faith. In the last struggle against Napoleon, before the Treaty of Amiens, Pitt only induced Austria to keep the field by promising her part of Piedmont and further subsidies, on condition that she did not make a separate peace with France before the end of February 1801. On Christmas day 1800, the Emperor, finding Pitt could not save Vienna, agreed to make that separate

peace, and by that peace, he ceded nothing that belonged to Austria, but a great deal that belonged to Germany. This was Pitt's stout bulwark against disorder and rapine.

Fox's private correspondence,—the letters of despair,—puts it beyond doubt that he was absolutely sincere in the belief that Pitt's policy in the war meant ruin to England, and that his opposition had nothing in it of faction or self-interest. It is probable that in one sense he overrated the influence of Pitt's Philippics against the French Government, and that he considered France to be more pacific than she really was. He wrote in August 1795, "Peace is the wish of the French, of Italy, Spain, Germany, and all the world, and Great Britain is alone the cause of preventing its accomplishment, and this not from any point of honour, or even interest, but merely lest there should be an example in the modern world of a great and powerful republic." In 1796 he certainly thought Pitt to blame for the failure of the negotiations, and convinced himself that Pitt was not in earnest in professing to wish for peace. The extravagant and intolerable demands of the French Government in 1797 he interpreted as meaning that it was impossible for Ministers, who had proscribed the French Revolution and made themselves so bitterly mistrusted, to make peace with any French Government. The most recent investigations into the negotiations conducted by Lord Malmesbury seem to confirm Fox's suspicions of Pitt's conduct.[1] For the rupture of the negotiations on that occasion in 1797 the responsibility of the French Government is absolute and indisputable, and from that time down to 1799, when Napoleon's overtures were rejected, there were no motions for peace in Parliament, and Fox was living in retirement.

In 1800 came Napoleon's overtures, addressed to George III., and the reply from Grenville which impeached the method of internal taxation in France, argued that the best and most natural pledge would be the restoration of that line of princes, which for so many years maintained the

[1] See Dorman, *History of the Empire.*

French nation in prosperity at home and in consideration abroad, and assured Napoleon that His Majesty "forms no claim to prescribe to France what shall be the form of her Government." From any point of view the actual language of the answer was singularly maladroit. Whether it was a wise or a foolish thing to reject Napoleon's advances it was the height of impolicy to lecture France about her domestic arrangements, and the use Napoleon made of it was to publish the answer broadcast in France, and to put himself in the right with all his countrymen. The debate that followed is chiefly remarkable for the allusions Pitt and Dundas made to the negotiations of 1796 and 1797, allusions that confirmed Fox's contemporary account of their motives, and for the masterpiece of irresistible reasoning and savage satire, in which Fox exposed the folly and the insolence of Grenville's language. By the terms of that answer Grenville had made the restoration of the Bourbons the object of the war, and the vitality of Pitt's illusions about the strength of the Revolutionary sentiment was shown by the hopes and plans he built in 1800 on the assumption that a Royalist rising was probable in France, or a mutiny in the fleet at Brest.

To understand Fox's opposition to Pitt during the war, we must further remember all the circumstances of the contemporary domestic struggle.[1] Pitt had been in the eyes of Fox and Burke the chief agent in protecting the rights of the Crown and the increased authority it had acquired during a disastrous fight; and the whole theory of the responsibility of Ministers was still a doubtful issue. When this is remembered, it is easy to understand why the Opposition disliked, where they did not actually resist, projects for increasing the militia force and building barracks, whilst they encouraged expenditure on the navy. Fox never opposed any scheme for increasing the navy. In the American war he was the

[1] Fox certainly carried his criticisms of Pitt's mistakes to an unwise point in the crisis of the Mutiny in 1797. That mutiny, it must be remembered, in considering the parallel in chap. v., came after the Coercion Acts.

most active and vigilant critic of the blunders and indolence of the Admiralty. In the French war he insisted very strongly on the necessity of reforming our method of construction, and said it would be "a most criminal neglect, if care was not taken to set on foot the building of new ships upon the improved construction, in every dock of the kingdom, and indeed wherever it was possible; and this, he trusted, would be the first measure of the new board of admiralty."[1]

To Fox the navy was the great national service, but there were also obvious political considerations in the opposition of the Whigs to the extension of military discipline, the survival of Blackstone's fear of the results of separating soldiers from the civilian population, and keeping them in distinct camps and barracks. Just as the Tories had always remembered Cromwell's military despotism, so the Whigs always remembered the army James II. maintained without the consent of Parliament. Fox believed the navy to be our great security against invasion, but he also believed that Pitt's military schemes had some other end in view, or might be put to some other purpose than the defence of the country against its foreign enemies.

All these apprehensions were very real to Fox, and they explain quite clearly his conduct between 1792 and 1800. To Pitt the great danger was the predominance of France in the Low Countries, and it was to averting that danger that all his energies were directed. To Fox the great dangers were, first, the triumph of a reactionary coalition, secondly, the aggrandisement of France by a policy which laid her neighbours at her feet. How far were Fox's fears just? He thought that if the Coalition succeeded in restoring the Bourbons, there would be a general conspiracy against domestic reform in every country. England was the only great Power that was governed in any sense by public discussion. If the reactionary Courts succeeded in suppressing reform in France, would not every great reform movement in England have to struggle against the general opinion of

[1] *Speeches*, vol. v. p. 353.

the Courts of Europe and not merely against the obstacles of the Court of St. James's? Fox certainly thought this would be the result, and the language of his public speeches was not more emphatic than the language of his private correspondence. "A greater evil," he wrote in June 1795, "than the restoration of the Bourbons to the world in general, and England in particular, can hardly happen."[1] At the end of the Napoleonic war England behaved with great magnanimity to France, but English diplomacy was at the best a passive partner with Metternich in repressing internal movements in the states of Europe. By that time the reforms introduced by Napoleon, under a system of conquests that was shameless and indefensible, had been too firmly established to be eradicated finally, but a general system of combined repression in 1793 or 1796 would have started under more promising auspices. Interference with England would have meant war, perhaps war with all Europe, but the fact that English opinion would have resisted any foreign pretensions, did not get rid of the obvious danger of associating the government of a free country with the tyrannical governments of the continent, in a struggle against movements of internal reform.

Fox had another end in view in his policy at this period. He believed that in proscribing the French Government Pitt had thrown away his power of making peace. In these circumstances it was of the first importance to the country that there should be a set of statesmen who had no part in that proscription, otherwise the rancorous suspicions which had grown up between the two Governments might be a perpetual obstacle to peace. Fox probably exaggerated Pitt's obstinacy, for the statesman who had retreated from his public challenge to Russia over Oczakow was not likely to make his personal pride an insuperable barrier to treating with the French Government. As a matter of fact, Pitt conquered the natural repugnance he must have felt to such a course when he thought England too exhausted to con-

[1] *Correspondence*, vol. iii. p. 116.

tinue the war, and few men have shown more fortitude in facing humiliation than he showed in 1797. But Fox was right in thinking that, in the general atmosphere of implacable hostility on both sides of the Channel, it was an advantage to England to have a party capable of taking office, which could treat with the Revolutionary Government without exposing the nation to a public indignity.

Fox's opposition to the war between 1792 and 1800 belongs therefore fundamentally to his whole career. He believed the policy of proscribing a foreign government was unjust, and dangerous to England; he believed that in co-operating with the allies Pitt was provoking a contest with the supreme energy of a national spirit, without calling into play any passion more lasting or effectual than an intermittent dynastic interest; he believed that the method of resistance Pitt had chosen was a method that aggrandised France, desolated England, sanctioned and justified all the ideas of foreign tyranny, and demanded of his countrymen the sacrifice of their political freedom. To Fox it was just as much England's sovereign interest that that policy should be abandoned, as it was to Pitt that Belgium should be wrested from France.

With the rupture of the Peace of Amiens a new set of issues presented itself to English politicians. The great moral principle that had been the battleground between Fox and Burke was no longer in question, for the right of France to settle her own affairs, assailed in Grenville's despatch of 1800, had been formally recognised in the Peace of Amiens. In May 1803 the peace broke down, and England began her long and final struggle with Napoleon's insatiable appetites. That Napoleon's pretensions were intolerable, and his design of absorbing the whole power of Europe a policy to be fought by all the means of diplomacy and arms, was common ground amongst the leading politicians of England. Fox's main difference with Addington in 1803 was that he thought the English Government had chosen the wrong ground for making war at a time when

it was of the gravest importance to impress Europe that England's quarrel with Napoleon was not selfish, but a quarrel in which she was the protagonist of the freedom and the rights of Europe. By the treaty of Amiens we were bound to give up Malta to the order of St. John, when certain conditions had been fulfilled. By May 1804, when war broke out, these conditions had been carried out. But many things had happened in the interval. Napoleon, pursuing in peace the restless ambitions of the war, had committed a series of infamous aggressions on Switzerland and Holland, and the English Government were cognisant of his secret plan for attacking England in the East.

The English Government, resting its case on these and other symptoms of Napoleon's hostility and aggressive designs, refused to give up Malta. Fox blamed this refusal. First of all he thought it morally indefensible. France had broken no article of the treaty, and we were retaliating on conduct we had not made a ground for war, by a distinct breach of our pledges. In the great speech in May 1803, in which Fox declared his views, he repudiated emphatically the idea that England had no right to go to war for the protection of Switzerland and Holland. He was always a much stronger adherent than Pitt of the doctrine of intervention in the affairs of Europe, and he held that independent powers were entitled, even if they were not bound, to interfere to prevent the destruction of a state by its neighbours. In the case of Poland, he thought England and France should have said to the three dividing powers, "You are doing an act, dreadful in itself, most dangerous in its consequences, most pernicious in its precedents, and although neither of us has any treaty or connection with Poland, we will prevent the division you are about to make of that kingdom." The only question to be considered was the practicability of intervention, and though Fox did not think intervention would have succeeded in the case of Switzerland, he blamed the Government for not remonstrating strongly against Napoleon's infamous conduct.

That conduct he denounced in the strongest language. "The French government was bound by treaty, as well as by every principle of justice, to withdraw their troops from Switzerland, to leave that country to itself, even with the miserable government they had established in it, and to respect its independence. During their dominion in that country they had formed a constitution there utterly repugnant to the principles, and odious to the feelings, of the people. The moment their troops were withdrawn, the people of Switzerland, by an insurrection founded on the truest principles of justice, rose and overturned that constitution. The French interposed to restore it, and, bad as the system was, the manner of their interfering to restore it, was, if possible, worse."[1]

"Were I a master of the use of colours, and could paint with skill, I would take the darkest to delineate the conduct of France towards Holland. It certainly has been worse treated by her than any other country whatever. Holland has not only suffered all the evils of war which are unavoidable; but when peace came, to turn that country, in defiance of a positive treaty with her, into a *depôt* for French troops, for the mere purpose, I sincerely believe, of making the Dutch pay the expence of maintaining them, was an act no less despicable for its meanness, than hateful for its atrocity."[2]

He regarded again with indignation Napoleon's impertinent demands for the expulsion of French royalists from England. "The demand that we should send out of this country persons obnoxious to the government of France, is made upon a most false and most dangerous principle. If it could be so established between the two states, that we should send away from England every person whom it might please the French government to call a rebel; and that reciprocally to please us, France should send away every person obnoxious to the ministers of this country; and if it were possible to conceive the still further extension of this

[1] *Speeches*, vol. vi. p. 493 (May 24, 1803).
[2] *Ibid.* vol. vi. p. 495 (May 24, 1803).

principle among the other governments of Europe, every unfortunate man, who might either from sentiment, connection, or accident, have been led or driven into some act of resistance, would be exposed to the same dangers, and incur the same penalties, as if he had been taken in actual arms against his country. The union of the two governments of England and France would effectually preclude him from any asylum any where, and would hunt him from the face of the globe. To give up men of this description, therefore, would be the worst and basest act I am capable of conceiving. No man, I believe, is more a lover of peace than I am. No one, perhaps,—and I hope not to be suspected at this time of bearing hard upon an unfortunate and fallen family, when I say it,—no one, perhaps, politically speaking, has less respect than I have for the house of Bourbon; yet I am ready to declare, that for that family, nay, for the worst prince of that family, if among them there should be a bad one, I should be ready to draw my sword and to go to war, rather than comply with a demand to withdraw from him the hospitality to which he had trusted."[1]

While the peace lasted, Fox certainly miscalculated the possibilities of war. It is curious to notice, in the light of the great commercial duel into which the struggle between England and France developed, the strongest reason he gave for expecting peace. In writing to Grey he remarked in December 1802, "You may depend upon it that commerce, and especially colonial commerce is now the principal object, and upon these subjects they have a stupid admiration of our systems of the worst kind, slave trade, prohibitions, protecting duties, etc. However bad their systems may be France must in some degree recover her commerce, and the more she does, the more will she be afraid of war with England."[2] The difference between his view and that of Pitt's after the rupture of the Peace of Amiens, was not so

[1] *Speeches*, vol. vi. p. 501 (May 24, 1803).
[2] *Memorials and Correspondence*, vol. iii. p. 381.

much that he wanted peace, and Pitt wanted war, as that he disagreed with Pitt on the relative importance of the European and the Eastern struggle. Napoleon's attack was to be twofold. It was to be an attempt, partly by annexation, partly by intimidation, partly by the creation of puppet governments, mocked with the vain names of separate peoples, and partly by a gigantic scheme of commercial exclusions to consolidate the continent of Europe against England. It was also to be an assault on our Eastern possessions, as the climax of a series of intrigues in Egypt. It is strange that Pitt, who kept a more constant eye than Fox on Napoleon's designs in the East, had been much less reluctant than Fox to cede Malta, in the Treaty arrangements of Amiens: Fox made no secret that he would have liked to retain Malta instead of Trinidad, whereas Pitt preferred the latter. Fox would have liked to keep Malta, or still more Minorca, because he thought the possession of one of those islands would strengthen England's position in Europe. But the very consideration that made him regret the loss of Malta made him deprecate a war in order to retain Malta after we had promised to give it up, for such a course, in his opinion, could only alienate Europe from her proper interest in our quarrel with Napoleon. By March 1804 Pitt had made up his mind that Napoleon must be fought instantly, and that it would be fatal to play into his hands by giving up Malta in order to carry out a treaty which, he maintained, Napoleon had broken in spirit. He defended this course by pointing to Napoleon's tricks for re-establishing himself in Egypt. Fox argued that a Government that had submitted to every encroachment of French ambition, which had left Holland and Switzerland to their fate, and all the smaller states of Europe under the dominion or influence of France, could not hope to persuade Europe that the fate of Malta was an object of interest to Europe. Pitt saw in imagination the gorgeous plans Napoleon had formed for a great Oriental Empire, and the retention of Malta he considered indispensable if that project was to be

defeated. Fox attached much more importance to the play of forces in Europe, and he was less dismayed by the prospect of danger in the East than by the prospect of Napoleon's mastery over a passive Europe.

The speeches Fox made on May 24 and May 27 sum up his ideas of the right method of fighting Napoleon. The new Tsar of Russia was that strange combination of dreams, noble fancies, and religious terrors, Alexander the first: a sovereign who was to play almost every rôle in Europe, from quixotic Liberal to fanatical despot, whose diplomacy was one day to protect the hopes of constitutionalism in Spain and Italy, and another to bind the prejudices of the continental courts with a mystical oath to the common cause of tyranny. Fox thought that England might find in Alexander's impulsive nature an ally in the struggle for the restoration of Europe. He proposed that the Government should accept Russian mediation between England and France, and though the motion was opposed by Lord Hawkesbury on behalf of the Government the same Minister declared, when Pitt had taken the same side as Fox, that the Government were ready to accept that mediation. "To obtain his good offices for the restoration of peace, is, in my opinion, of more real consequence to us, and to all Europe, than our possessing Malta under any circumstances. But is there not great probability of our being enabled, through these means, to preserve and consolidate the peace on a much broader basis than that of settling the present dispute concerning Malta? Suppose that illustrious prince were not only to guarantee Malta, but were to enter into guarantees upon a still more extensive principle—to guarantee Egypt to the Turks, for instance. Would not that be worth a thousand Maltas? I go still further. By what I have heard of the Emperor of Russia, from a quarter on which I think I can rely, he is disposed also to look to the freedom of Switzerland and of Holland. I do firmly believe, that under his mediation and guarantee, undertaken upon a large scale, not only Switzerland

and Holland, but perhaps even Spain, might recover their independence, and afford you thus an additional security for peace, or assistance in any renewal of the contest. On these large and liberal principles of policy, other powers might be brought to concur with you; whereas, if you are seen to pursue nothing but your own sordid separate interest, you will obtain no cordial assistance, and you will conclude no solid pacification."[1]

This particular project failed, but the speech is interesting as illustrating Fox's general ideas on the Napoleonic war. He believed that it was of the first importance to convince the peoples of Europe that their interests were identical with those of England, and that they were not the pawns of her ambition. Even the good wishes, he said, of the small states who could not give any immediate assistance were not to be despised. To gain the public confidence of Europe it was necessary first of all, to put England conspicuously in the right, in any quarrel or negotiation with Napoleon. Napoleon himself was as skilful as he was unscrupulous, in so arranging his dispositions as to impress upon his own nation the conviction that war was not of his seeking. It was bad policy for England to do anything to confirm that impression in the minds of other nations by taking her stand on the wrong points, and by appearing to refuse any overtures for peace. Secondly the whole plan of stimulating, rather than reinforcing resistance to Napoleon was mistaken, for two reasons: first it looked as if England had her own private ends to serve in spending her millions in keeping Europe in a state of war; secondly no resistance to Napoleon that was not spontaneous could really be effective. The system of subsidising the continent to make war against Jacobin principles, in the last great war, had in Fox's opinion almost annihilated the influence of England on the continent. Fox had always argued that if France threw Europe on her resources, France would be beaten: the best hope for England lay in winning the confidence of

[1] *Speeches*, vol. v. p. 519 (May 24, 1803).

the peoples of Europe, and in giving prompt assistance to any people whose self-respect revolted against Napoleon's pretensions. These ideas underlay his speeches and his letters, and they find expression in the *Memoir* written by Sir Robert Adair of his mission to the Court of Vienna when Fox was Foreign Secretary. "My first audience of the Emperor was on the eighteenth of June 1806, for the delivery of my credentials, and my first confidential conference with his minister immediately followed. In this interview I laid open to him without reserve the whole course of policy intended to be pursued by the new Government. I told him explicitly that the system of forcing or persuading foreign powers, by means of subsidies, to enter into wars against their own conception of their interests, if ever it had been acted upon by England, was now effectually renounced; but that at the same time, and particularly with reference to the present situation of Austria, if she should feel herself in real danger from fresh exactions and injuries on the part of France, we were not the less determined to assist her in a defensive war; and I did not neglect to repeat to him Mr. Fox's last words to me, 'that Austria did not appear sufficiently aware of her danger'" (p. 13).

The assumption of Fox's criticism of Pitt's policy was that that policy of enlisting a miscellaneous collection of motives, the rapacity of one power, the jealousy of another, the pride of a third, was really arming England much less effectually than an appeal to the single impulse of self-preservation. Pitt had played on all the humours of the Courts: Fox wished to rely solely on the sense of danger and self-respect. Pitt, by arraying against France forces which were inadequate because they were various and uncertain, had laid one power after another at her feet. Fox wished France to be fought by the arms of powers that were erect and resolute as England herself, fighting consciously for nothing less than their own salvation. It is hazardous to speculate on the view dead men would

take of any particular question, but it seems as certain as most things can be that if Fox had lived on to the days of the Peninsula war and the German rising, his opinions would have been those of Horner,[1] and he would have seen in the insurgent nationalism of Spain and the awakening of a proud spirit in Germany just the forces he had relied on for that mortal struggle.

Neither Pitt nor Fox lived to see even the first Act of that great drama of retribution. In 1804 and 1805 they had two great differences. Pitt tried a third coalition: Russia, anxious for the hegemony in a crusade for freedom: Austria, wasted, doubtful and unready: Prussia, torn by fear and mean ambition. The coalition ended in Austerlitz, and the death of Pitt. The chief arguments in its favour are, first, that it was a great concerted effort on the part of three Powers for a specific and honourable end, the rescue of Holland and Switzerland, a very different coalition from that of 1793, and secondly that it acted as a powerful distraction at the time Napoleon was preparing for the invasion of England. The chief argument against it was Fox's argument that Austria, who was only induced to join

[1] Horner's Letter, July 1808, on the Spanish Rising. "It is quite a new experiment, in which the powers are for the first time to be tried of a vast regular army, and an enthusiastic people. The circumstances are very favourable on both sides; this is indeed the very crisis of the fate of Europe, and the event (either way) will perhaps be the most decisive test of the genius and effects of the French Revolution. The one result would revive our original persuasion, in its first ardour, that the people are not to be subdued by foreign troops, unless the love of their country is lost in a contempt of their government. The other would sink me in final despair of ever living to see prosperity or liberty again in any part of Europe" (vol. i. p. 427).

Horner's Letter in 1813 on the German Rising. "I cannot hesitate now in believing, that the determination of the French military force, and the insurrection of national spirit in the North of Germany, form a new conjuncture, in which the Whigs ought to adopt the war system, upon the very same principle which prompted them to stigmatise it as unjust in 1793, and as premature in 1803. The crisis of Spanish politics in May 1808 seemed to me the first turn of things in a contrary direction: and I have never ceased to lament that our party took a course, so inconsistent with the true Whig principles of continental policy, so revolting to the popular feelings of the country, and to every true feeling for the liberties and independence of mankind" (vol. ii. p. 158).

the coalition by a subsidy of £3,000,000, was unprepared, and that to stimulate her to precipitate war, against the better judgment of her best Ministers was only to aggrandise further the power of France.[1] Prussia held her hand and intrigued with both sides, and next year when Fox was in office the English Government had to declare war on her for seizing Hanover, acting, as Fox said, as the minister of the rapacity of her master, uniting all that was contemptible in slavery with all that was hateful in robbery.

The second great difference was over the question of military defence. Pitt's method was to increase and develop the volunteers and militia. Fox wanted to arm the peasantry of the country and also to reform the army system by substituting service for a fixed period for service for life, and making the army more attractive in other ways as a career. He argued that for ordinary military purposes regulars were incomparably more effective, that the improvement of the regular army should be the first consideration, and that Pitt's plans for extending the volunteer system had told seriously on recruiting for the army. For purposes of defence an armed peasantry would be the most formidable weapon. "It should be recollected, that the great defence of a country consists of an armed people. The enemy may have a large disciplined army, and so may you to resist him; but that from which you would derive your great advantage, that which always must form the powerful opponent of the invading army, would be an armed peasantry. That should be your principal defence. It is like the weapon with which nature furnishes animals for their protection. It is the great bulwark of a country. You might thus have an aid in every

[1] Letter to Adair, October 6, 1805. "*My* opinion for refusing the subsidy is clear: whether Bonaparte actually gets it in money or in money's worth, that is, increase of greatness and dominion, it comes to the same thing. . . . Concerning the conduct of the war there can be no difference; but the truth is, that any war at this time, unless well concerted and directed rather to future successes than to the present, and more in the nature of a *sap* than a *coup de main*, is nonsense, and for such a war neither we nor our allies are by any means prepared." —*Memorials and Correspondence*, vol. iv. p. 117.

village and town, more numerous and effective than your volunteers; and you might put the country in such a state of defence, that the enemy, even after a victory, should he obtain one, over your regular army in the field, would not send out a detachment to forage, or for any other purpose, without exposing them to be shot at from every hedge, from every cottage, from every enclosure—by men, not dressed so as to be easily perceivable, not wearing those coloured garments which would put the enemy's troops on their guard."[1]

These ideas were partly carried out when Fox came into office, and the Government of which he was a member, besides attempting to take the army out of the mischievous control of the King, introduced some most beneficent reforms: they abolished the system of recruiting for life, and substituted for it a system by which men were recruited for seven years, with certain inducements to re-enlist for a further period; they made punishment in the army less brutal; and they reduced the expenses of the volunteer system.

The few months Fox was in office are memorable for the last effort to make peace between England and France. The negotiations arose out of Fox's letter to Talleyrand informing him that a stranger had called at the Foreign Office with news of a plot for the assassination of Napoleon, but the actual suggestion for a negotiation came from France. Fox was never very sanguine of the result, and at the end of April he wrote to the Duke of Bedford, "All negotiation with France is now, I understand, at an end. We insisted on negotiating jointly with Russia; they on a separate negotiation." On this point, however, Napoleon gave way. The British Government was much embarrassed by the strange conduct of the Russian plenipotentiary, whose action in making a separate peace was disowned by the Russian Government, but the actual difference over which the negotiations broke down was the question of Sicily.

[1] Feb. 1804. *Speeches*, vol. vi. pp. 543, 544.

All hopes of peace were really over before Fox died, for Napoleon's demand for Sicily he resisted with the same inflexible tenacity that had made Vergennes call him more than twenty years before, *un fagot d'épines*. Napoleon wanted the island because of his plans in the East, but even if Fox had not grasped its importance in relation to the war with Napoleon he would have been uncompromising in resisting a principle of diplomacy which he had justly stigmatised as robbery. The negotiations convinced Fox that Napoleon was insincere in affecting to wish for peace and that the war must be prosecuted resolutely, and the nation settled down to that long struggle in which the stubborn temper of England was at last rewarded by the awakening of a national spirit in Napoleon's victims.

Fox's attitude during this war has been spoken of by some of his critics as unpatriotic. The principles that inspired his conduct throughout have been carefully discussed in this chapter, but it is worth while to consider rather further the meaning of a charge which is often brought against politicians with a criminal carelessness. To many persons patriotism is merely preferring your country to other countries, a virtue which is unborn in nine men out of ten, and is not acquired by prayer or vigil or fasting or self-discipline in the small minority that is born without it. Politicians must expect a rather more searching light to play on their motives and their actions. Do they love their country more than their own power, their own fame amongst their countrymen, and their own complaisance to persons whom they like to please? Judged by that test North must be convicted of a want of patriotism, when he persisted in a course he thought mistaken and injurious to his country from a criminal deference to the wishes of the King. Judged by that test what is to be said of the conduct of Pitt and of Fox in 1804? Pitt went out of office in 1801, and as early as March 1803 the feeble and embarrassed Addington made overtures for a coalition. The troubles and perils of the nation were growing. Pitt's brother, the incom-

petent Chatham, was to be Prime Minister, and Pitt and Addington Joint Secretaries of State. Pitt laughed at the proposal. "Really," he said, with what Lord Rosebery calls good-natured irony, "I had not the curiosity to ask what I was to be." A month later Addington offered the Premiership to Pitt, and Pitt who had taken into his Cabinet men compared with whom Addington was almost distinguished, proposed to give Addington an honorary office in the Lords. In other words Pitt though he considered the incompetence of the Government a serious danger to the country, was not willing to save the country unless he was Prime Minister, and unless Addington, with whom he had developed a quarrel on personal and not on public grounds, was excluded. Addington was a man of mediocre ability and odious opinions, and no one of importance except Warren Hastings ever thought him a capable Minister. But Pitt acted towards him, as Sir G. C. Lewis said, in a manner that reduced public duty to a question of private feeling and personal delicacy. It would be ridiculous to close one's eyes to the extenuating circumstances, to Pitt's moral mastery of the House of Commons, and his great history as Prime Minister, but it is impossible not to remember that two men as great as Pitt, his father and Fox, were much less exacting in laying down the terms on which they were ready to save the state.

Whatever may be thought of the spirit in which Pitt considered the overtures from Addington, there can be only one opinion of his conduct when he formed a Ministry in 1804. He drew up the scheme of a comprehensive Cabinet, including Fox, Fitzwilliam, and Grey, accompanying the scheme with a message to the King that he wished him to understand distinctly that if the King objected to Fox and Grenville and their friends, he was quite ready to form a Government without them. The surrender was as spontaneous as Pitt's surrender of the Catholics three years earlier. The King, who never let any care for England dim his private hatreds, saw his opportunity at once, and insisted

on the exclusion of Fox. If Pitt had wanted, he could have made it impossible to form a Ministry without Fox, as Grenville did two years later, but to do that would have been to put pressure on the King, and to do what was harder still for that proud nature, confess that Fox was indispensable. It was too hard a thing to demand of him, and he chose to humour the King, and flatter himself with the confidence he did not feel. "His kindness for the aged King," says Lord Rosebery, "was to prove a cruel obstacle in his path." The sentence scarcely does justice to the national interests involved. It was not only Pitt who suffered, it was the country, for Pitt himself considered that the first thing the country needed was a Government embracing all the available talent. What he did in effect was to postpone his patriotism to two other motives, his affection for the King, an affection that led him to send court loungers into the field against Napoleon's trained generals, and a dislike to own that he was inadequate, single-handed, to the tremendous problem of the hour. His temptation, let us admit, was severe, but it remains that he succumbed.

Such was Pitt's conduct, and how did Fox behave? Fox and Grenville had agreed not to take office separately, as they would thereby make themselves accessories to the system of court proscriptions. Fox spontaneously absolved Grenville from that compact, and when Pitt informed him through an intermediary that the King would not admit him, and would admit Grenville, Fox said he was too old for office, that he hoped his friends would join Pitt, and that in that event he would support the new Government. It was scarcely the answer of a man, as Fox has often been painted, who allowed an acrid sense of disappointment or an ungovernable party passion to blunt his consciousness of what he owed his country.

It is necessary to go into this field of motives and rival impulses in politicians' minds because no charge is flung so ignorantly or so recklessly as that of want of patriotism.

Few persons stop to think what they mean by it. They do not pretend that Fox or Pitt or Burke or Chatham would have betrayed England in cold blood for money, or decorations, or for the satisfaction of some personal spite. If they mean that no one of those four men kept in strict subjection, every moment of his life, all the little acrimonies and ambitions that turn a man's mind from his duty to his country, their contention is not likely to be disputed by anyone who remembers Chatham's behaviour in 1766, the behaviour of Fox and Burke in 1789, or the behaviour of Pitt in 1784, 1803, and 1804. They were all mortal men, and not one of them lived every moment of his life in the transcendent transports of patriotism, any more than he lived it in the transports of any other virtue; but they were all men who loved their country and dedicated their great talents to its service. Fox, it has sometimes been said, loved justice better than his country. It would be truer to say he never thought that the interests of justice and those of his country could be long separated. When he rejoiced in the failure of the attempt to subdue America, or the failure of the first confederacy against France, he rejoiced in the collapse of a project that he considered just as ruinous to England as to America or France. There is nothing that conflicts with Fox's reputation for patriotism in the passages from his letters which record his joy over the failure of the Quiberon expedition or the American War unless Chatham's rejoicings over American resistance are criminal, but the passage that has made the deepest impression on the public mind is the passage in which he said to Grey in 1801, ". . . . the truth is I am gone something further in hate to the English Government than perhaps you and the rest of my friends are, and certainly further than can with prudence be avowed. The triumph of the French Government over the English does in fact afford me a degree of pleasure which it is very difficult to disguise."[1] Most persons remember the sentence and forget the circumstances under which this

[1] *Memorials and Correspondence*, vol. iii. p. 349.

sentence was written. Fox never said that he rejoiced that the peace was a bad one for England, and he expressly stated in that very letter that the reason he welcomed the peace was that he knew, if it were delayed, it would be worse. All that he welcomed was the humiliation of a party that had called him a traitor for suggesting that peace should be made on terms far less adverse to England, that had taken his name off the Privy Council, that had been unsparing in its use of the rougher expedients of party malice, and that had omitted no means of fomenting public mistrust and public hatred of him. For several years Fox had been the daily target of offensive and indecent caricatures and lampoons; he had been held up to public odium as a public enemy, an association under the patronage of the Government had incited mobs to break his house in, and he had had to encounter all that an intolerant majority, and its retinue of base and savage passion, could do to make life intolerable. It would have been more large-minded to have forgotten all that persecution in the hour of a sombre peace, but it is rather hard to erect the fugitive pleasure Fox took in the mortification of that party into a serious and solemn impeachment of his patriotism.

There is one other canon of patriotism which must be remembered in discussing this question. Some persons argue that it is unpatriotic to oppose a Government during a war; an argument which means that whatever one party may think good for the state, all others must accept on pain of being thought bad patriots. If this is to be accepted as the standard, Pitt is just as guilty as Fox, for Pitt opposed the American war when our condition was just as critical as in the French war, and Pitt, Chatham, Fox, Burke, and Windham all alike stand condemned. The opposition to the Government from 1792 to 1800 is to be distinguished from that from 1804 to 1806, and some persons whilst thinking the first opposition creditable and intelligible, think the second, the opposition of Fox, Windham, and Grenville, mere faction. Why, if Fox and his allies did not disapprove

of the war with Napoleon did they oppose Pitt's Government in 1804? The reason is that Fox was opposing not only the whole plan of Pitt's subsidised coalitions, not only a military system, which he and Windham condemned and afterwards reformed, but also the principle of the King's supremacy. Was that a mere secondary domestic issue? Not in Pitt's opinion in 1782 when he opposed North's Government during the American War, and expressly ascribed all our misfortune to the King's influence. Not in Fox's opinion in 1804 when the King's influence was allowed to weaken ministers, to destroy policies, and to overrule the moral pledges of Pitt himself. In both cases the supremacy of the Court was the central mischief and disorder of the State.

CHAPTER XIII

RELIGIOUS TOLERATION

The disabilities of Dissenters, Protestant and Catholic, in George the Third's Reign. (1) Test and Corporation Acts. (2) Penal laws. Fox's great efforts to secure religious freedom. Contrast between (1) Burke and Pitt and (2) Burke and Fox.

THE pageants of religious war[1] and spectacular persecution belong to the age of a single-eyed fanaticism which knows no persuasion but the sharp edge of torture, and no fear in life or death but the infinite terror with which Catholic legend filled the mind of men who had thrown aside all the rest of its doctrines. Incessant, agile, pliant, that restless spirit still hovered round the courts of Europe in the last half of the eighteenth century; but it no longer governed their policy. Catholic powers were allied with Mohammedan, religion blessed, but did not declare war; heresy found a nook or a refuge in every nation, in some, in the gay haunts of fashion or rich splendour, and the question that troubled the minds of thinking men was the lawfulness or the expediency of restraining opinion, not in order to scatter more widely the hopes of happiness in another world, but to strengthen the fabric of orderly government in this. The intolerance of Governments was no longer the pitiless rapture that gave an ecstasy to suffering and persecution, it was the weapon of a statecraft that was cold, circumspect, and pre-eminently secular.

Of no country was this truer than it was of England

[1] Mr. Lecky considers the Peace of Westphalia to have put an end to religious wars.

where two great acts of public policy had struck a fatal blow at the rigid doctrine of uniformity. By the Union with Scotland a heretic Church was acknowledged as the official Church of North Britain; and in Canada a wise Minister, anticipating the policy that has made her British, gave Quebec the religion of her choice, though that religion was still branded by English law as criminal, and still dreaded by English opinion as darkness and oppression, and the very symbol of Jacobite disorder. The condition of England seemed favourable to toleration. George III. had ascended the throne, in the midst of a vigilant Protestantism but a rather leisurely Christianity, in an age in which the memories of the Protestant Revolution were still vigorous, but in which spiritual energy had shown little alacrity or passion, until Wesley and Whitefield had set out to preach repentance and to shake England from her slumber. That rather languid piety had been no bad friend to toleration. Other causes, too, contributed to make governments hospitable to various creeds. There was now no religious body in England hostile to the Hanover settlement: the High Church party had abandoned alike its extreme pretensions and its disaffection to the dynasty; the Catholics whose numbers had shrunk were loyal and well disposed; the Nonconformists were the staunch allies of a House to protect which they had taken up arms in spite of the law; and what religious emotion there was in England rallied all creeds to a throne that no one of them any longer dreaded. The storms of religious passion which had swept over politics, crashing on Protestant and on Catholic in turn, with the implacable vengeance of a conquering faith, seemed to have spent their fury, and to have left England at last with the tranquil surface of a glassy sea.

In such a condition of things it is not surprising that persistent efforts were made to bring the Statute Book of England, which was still crowded with the bloody decrees of dead sovereigns, and the bloody legacies of quarrels that good men hoped were dead, into some correspondence with

the more enlightened sentiments of the times. Reformers, as often happens in a country that boasts that it finds justice in rough compromise and practical evasion, had preferred to make glosses and erasures where a bolder policy would have blotted out some penal measure. The sanctity of religion was still maintained by the barbarity of the legal punishments to avenge it. Catholics were incapacitated by law from inheriting or purchasing land; priests were liable to perpetual imprisonment for saying mass, and informers entitled to a reward for exposing them. None of the Statutes requiring conformity with the Church of England had been repealed, though the Toleration Act relieved dissenting ministers from the restrictions imposed by the Act of Uniformity and the Conventicle Act, and exempted all persons from penalties on taking the oath of allegiance and supremacy and making a declaration against transubstantiation. Catholics and Unitarians were left outside of the shelter of this Act. The Test and Corporation Acts, by which all persons holding office under the Crown, or municipal office, were obliged to take the Sacrament, remained on the Statute Book; the one Act passed in 1673 to exclude Roman Catholic Ministers from the King's Councils, the other, passed twelve years earlier, when the Restoration had brought the Churchmen into power. Under these Acts, Catholic and Protestant Dissenters both suffered, for though the Protestant Dissenters had supported the Test Act, in order to maintain Protestant supremacy in England, they had found it no easy matter to escape from the toils in which they had allowed the Church to imprison them. But for thirty years a yearly Act of Indemnity had been passed for Protestant Dissenters who had held office contrary to this Act. The law exacted conformity, but condoned nonconformity. The Penal Laws of England, as Chatham said, were so many bloodhounds held in leash. In the long struggle to remove the civil disabilities of Dissenters, and to destroy the Penal Laws, Fox almost alone of our great statesmen never gave a vote against religious

freedom, and scarcely ever gave a silent vote in its defence.

Unfortunately, in the midst of the promising conditions under which the reign opened, there were two influences which were strongly adverse. The Church of England, grasping the difference between George III. and his predecessors developed a sudden enthusiasm for the Hanover settlement, which resulted in a close alliance between an obstinate and superstitious king, and a Church that was greedy of power but had hitherto looked elsewhere for its secular auxiliaries. Church and State became something more than a formal association when George represented the State and the Church regulated his odd and unattractive conscience. The House of Hanover came to stand for the ascendancy of the very Church that had treated it for two reigns with suspicion and dislike. The other influence was the influence that stifled liberty in every form during the last half of this disastrous reign. No sect or creed excited the fears of Governments in 1760, in 1770, or 1780,[1] but with the agitations of the Revolution, men saw danger in every concession to heterodoxy, and dissenter became a synonym for jacobin. The convulsions across the Channel were all traced to the spirit of rebellious atheism, and the conspicuous and honourable part played by Price and Priestley at home helped to identify dissent and sedition in the eyes of statesmen to whom religion was neither true nor false, but merely order or discontent. These forces conquered, and in a reign in which the Church produced a Paley, and the world a Fox, intolerance in Church and State maintained its central citadels against the assaults of both.

Two measures of emancipation were carried during Lord North's Ministry, the Ministry, by the odd accident of politics, in which toleration won almost its solitary successes. The

[1] It is noticeable that an objection was raised to the Protestant Dissenters Relief Bill in 1779 on the ground that it was a time of tumult and distress, but the objection carried no weight for the Bill passed its second reading almost unanimously.

Toleration Act had exempted dissenting ministers from the obligation to subscribe to certain of the Thirty-nine Articles which expressed the distinctive doctrines of the Church of England. In 1772 Sir Henry Hoghton proposed and carried through the House of Commons, with little opposition, a Bill exempting dissenting ministers from subscription to any of the Thirty-nine Articles. The Bill though supported by Chatham, Richmond, Camden, and Mansfield, was rejected in the Lords by a majority of 73, and the following year the Lords rejected a similar Bill a second time. In 1779 Sir Henry Hoghton passed his Bill in the Commons, but, under the pressure of a petition from the University of Oxford, North proposed to enact a simple test of Christianity and fidelity to the Bible; this amendment was accepted, and, in this revised form the Bill pleased both Houses. The discussion brought out the fundamental differences between Burke and Fox; Burke, who had spoken for Sir Henry Hoghton's Bill both times, strongly supported the imposition of this test, whereas Fox as strongly objected to the doctrine that the state had a right to impose any test at all.

The other measure of emancipation was Sir George Savile's Bill for relieving Roman Catholics from some of the barbarous penalties to which they were liable; perpetual imprisonment for saying mass, the prohibition to acquire land by purchase, and the forfeiture of the estates of Roman Catholic heirs educated abroad to the next Protestant heir. The melancholy sequel of this Act is well known. Dundas having promised to bring in a Bill the following year to extend the provisions of this Act to Scotland, the virulent Protestants of that country organised a series of riots, destroyed chapels and houses, defied the magistrates, and established a reign of terror. Dundas postponed his Bill on the ground that it was an unkindness to the Catholics themselves to persevere with a measure which would only inflame still further the Scottish prejudice against them. To this course Fox strongly objected, urging that instead

of merely compensating the unfortunate Catholics for their losses, Parliament ought to pursue its original plan of abolishing the penal laws. "It became the honour and the humanity, as well as the dignity of Parliament to repeal the penal laws against them, and not be deterred by insurrections in a small corner of their Empire from doing an act of common justice." Fox's policy was not adopted, and the rioters were left masters of the field in Scotland. This fatal surrender to anarchy did not long remain unpunished. The leaders of Anti-Catholic fanaticism, not content with one sensational triumph, set themselves to reverse the English measure by the methods that had averted the Scottish measure: petitions were presented to Parliament, by members who were escorted to the House of Commons by disorderly mobs who assailed the foremost leaders of emancipation and laid siege to the House of Commons.

There was worse to follow. The fury of the mob overran the capital, and London was for days given up to a riot in which all the elements of disorder, and the hallucinations of religious bigotry, the savagery of a rabble in the ascendant, the spirit of purposeless destruction, and the hope of plunder combined to make a pandemonium of all that is most diabolical in human nature. The collapse of authority was partly redeemed by the dignified bearing of Parliament. The House of Commons met and adjourned, not without some bitter speeches from Fox and Burke on the failure of the Government to suppress disorder, and the outrage of the mob "that had degraded England in the sight of Europe." In the Lords, Richmond and Shelburne attributed all the trouble to the Quebec Bill, and Shelburne pressed for its repeal. This concession was refused, but from the discussion in the House of Commons, when the rioters had at last abandoned the furious work of pillage and destruction, more from the stupor of drunkenness and physical fatigue than from the intervention of the magistrates, it is clear that there was some disposition to regard Sir George Savile's Bill as dangerously generous to the Catholics.

Burke, who was never more sublime than in such a crisis as that of the Gordon tumults, set himself with Fox to check this spirit of nervous suspicion, but a bill restraining Catholics from teaching Protestants was carried through the Commons, and only lost in the Lords because the Bishops objected to an amendment, qualifying its provisions, inserted by the Lord Chancellor.

Only two other measures relating to religious toleration were carried during Fox's lifetime. In 1792 the disabilities of the Episcopalians in Scotland were abolished, and a year earlier a Bill was carried through Parliament relieving "Protesting Catholic Dissenters" from the penal statutes. The persons to whom the Bill applied were Catholics who protested against the Pope's temporal authority, and his right to excommunicate kings and absolve subjects from their allegiance, as well as the right alleged to be assumed by Roman Catholics of not keeping faith with Dissenters. The penal statutes which were no longer to apply to these Catholics occupied nearly seventy pages in Burn's *Ecclesiastical Law*. As an example of their severity, Mr. Mitford the mover of this Bill reminded the House that a Catholic priest was liable to suffer death for persuading others to adopt his religion. The Bill encountered no opposition of the kind which had asserted itself so sensationally in the country, but not in the House of Commons, twelve years earlier. But Fox argued very strenuously against limiting the relief promised by the Bill to any one set of Catholics. The Bill did not propose to confer on Catholics the right of holding any office, but merely the right of holding opinions, and it was monstrous that any man should be liable to the death penalty for holding particular religious views. Fox contrasted the general toleration of Prussia, France, America, and Holland with the parsimonious indulgence of a measure that still kept these bloody laws over the heads of men whose only offence was their religion. Few of those statesmen who rejected Fox's central argument that the punishment or restraint of opinion was indefensible were, in their

hearts, unfriendly to the proposal to extend the Bill, and Pitt expressed a hope that all the severer laws would be repealed. Burke, the most cautious in admitting innovation, and the most uncompromising in denying the right to toleration, had always befriended the Catholics, and at the moment the Bill was under discussion, his normal goodwill had warmed into passionate sympathy from his horror of the treatment the Catholic Church had received in France at the hands of the Revolution. Fox's efforts to extend the Bill and to eliminate certain very odious provisions were unavailing. In the Lords the Bill was amended for the better by a Bishop. Two years later a similar Bill for Scotland was carried without opposition.

In 1792 Fox made an heroic effort to repeal certain penal laws affecting religious opinions, and pressing in particular on the Unitarians. All the circumstances frowned on him. The terror inspired by the French Revolution had now penetrated the governing classes; the Unitarians were an old sect, but they had suddenly become important by large accessions from the Presbyterians; their leaders were known as strong political reformers, exuberantly sanguine about French experiments; and the revival of religious enthusiasm that had followed the work of Wesley and Whitefield had not made it easier for men who denied the Trinity to win the indulgence of that grave school which mingled with its devoted philanthropy the morose theology of exclusive salvation and all its grim machinery of savage and eternal punishment. Fox's effort was resisted by Pitt and by Burke, and seconded by North, who rigidly excluded Dissenters from civil office but condemned as mere persecution the law which made it penal to reject the doctrine of the Trinity. Pitt laid stress mainly on the danger of innovation in critical times. The laws were not likely to be turned to practical oppression, and it was a rash experiment to give any countenance to a sect that was notoriously unfriendly to Church and King. But the sternest and most intractable opponent was Burke. The

proposal loomed up before his angry vision, like some hideous monster which had been fashioned by collecting and combining every doctrine and every principle he hated most in the world. Even Montesquieu, after seeing at work all the civil embarrassments that were prompted by spiritual interests, had laid it down that a magistrate should not admit a new religion. Burke who sixteen years before the Notables had been summoned had said that infidels were never to be tolerated, and who soon learnt to call every Frenchman who was not in arms against his own country an atheist, found himself invited to give quarter to a sect whose religion he hated, and whose politics he dreaded, in the name of a principle he had consistently denied, and in the heyday of a Revolution, whose climax he believed to be anarchy, and whose origin he believed to be a blasphemous unbelief. All the horrors of new doctrines in theology and in politics danced before him like lesser demons of the Revolution. He proudly replied to Fox's appeal for toleration that Parliament had never declared itself on toleration or persecution, it had decided each particular application of relief on the actual circumstances of the case, and in this instance the circumstances made it madness to grant the claim of a dangerous and seditious sect. Fox made a fine and impassioned defence of complete toleration, but he was beaten by 142 to 63 votes, and the legal toleration of Unitarians was only established twenty years later.

The other great agitation in which Fox played a leading part raised a different issue. By the Toleration Act and the Protestant Dissenters Relief Act the recognised Nonconformist bodies had won freedom of worship and organisation. The Test and Corporation Acts excluded them from certain civil employments. On paper these disabilities stretched right through the public life of the country outside Parliament. A Nonconformist who refused to take the Anglican sacrament could not hold any office under the Crown, a commission in the army or navy, a civil office or seat in a corporation, nor could he take part in the direc-

tion of the Bank of England, of the India, or Russian, or South Sea, or Turkish companies. These Acts operating in a country with two established religions produced some ludicrous anomalies. A Nonconformist could vote for Parliament, and could sit in Parliament; outside Parliament he was disqualified for the meanest offices under a corporation. A member of the Established Presbyterian Church in Scotland could not hold office in England under the Crown, unless he communicated with the Established Anglican Church, thereby associating himself with a religion which he could not hold in Scotland without suffering disabilities. The penalties on the Statute Book for the violation of these Acts were very brutal, depriving the offender of almost all his rights at law. The Acts were constantly evaded, and annual Acts of Indemnity were passed to protect persons who broke them, but Beaufoy showed that they were no protection to men who conscientiously refused to take the Sacrament. The common fear of political Catholicism in Ireland led to the repeal of all Acts against Protestants in that country in 1779. In England the alarm which had produced this concerted method of defence disappeared too soon to impel the Anglican Protestants to remove the disabilities of the Protestant dissenters, and the trials of strength in George III.'s reign were not influenced by a religious panic that in this case alone might have been salutary in its effects. Three attempts were made to repeal the Acts. The first, a motion made by Beaufoy, in 1787, was defeated by 176 to 98; the second, also made by Beaufoy in 1789, by 122 to 102; the third, made by Fox in 1790, by 294 to 105; whilst a proposal made by Sir Gilbert Elliot in 1791 to repeal the Test Act, as far as it related to Scotland, was defeated by 149 to 62. The Acts were finally repealed in 1828, though even then the opposition was represented by 193 votes in a House of 430.

The case against the Acts was presented with unanswerable force by Fox and Beaufoy. The points of attack were many and various. First of all the Acts were a real

hardship to Dissenters. If the annual Acts of Indemnity had been a perfectly valid protection, and Beaufoy could show that they were not, the Dissenters were still entitled to complain that their religion was branded with a public stigma. The Dissenters were, by universal admission, a loyal and an orderly section of the community. They had taken up arms to defend the Hanover dynasty in 1745, and their only reward had been an Act of Parliament pardoning demonstrations of fidelity to the throne, which the law forbade to all but Anglicans. The Acts under which they suffered had been placed on the Statute Book with their own co-operation, and it was a mean and unworthy policy for the Established Church to turn to their own oppression the measures they had assented to when there was a danger of the overthrow of Protestantism. These Acts were a weakness to the country because they imposed disabilities on such men as John Howard, and deprived the nation of the services of conscientious, industrious, and public-spirited Englishmen. They were a discredit to England because France, a Catholic country, admitted Protestants, and Sweden, a Protestant country, admitted Catholics to the army and the fleet, whilst England, a Protestant country, could not even throw open her services to all Protestants. The Jacobite spectre had been finally laid, and the State only suffered by retaining, as symbols of disunion, institutions originally due to a political danger that had vanished. An embarrassment to the State these Acts did a real injury to religion. The profanation of the Sacrament implied in making it a test for office was described in a powerful passage by Beaufoy whose speech in moving the repeal of the Acts in 1789 was an utterance of remarkable power. "The Saviour of the world instituted the Eucharist in commemoration of His death, an event so tremendous that nature afflicted, hid herself in darkness, but the British legislature has made it a qualification for gauging beer barrels and soapboilers' tubs, for writing custom house tickets and debentures, and for seizing

smuggled tea. The mind is oppressed with ideas so misshapen, and monstrous. Sacrilege, hateful as it always is, never before assumed an appearance so hideous and deformed." All these arguments gave a peculiar force to the demand for the repeal of the Test Acts, a demand which Fox placed on the boldest ground of all, urging now as at all times that the State had no right to make any inquisition into a man's opinions, and to punish or to disqualify him on any other ground than that of his overt actions.

The attitude of the three other leading statesmen was pre-eminently characteristic. North roundly declared that the Test and Corporation Acts were indispensable to the safety of the Established Church, and that the Established Church was indispensable to the safety of the nation. The Dissenters enjoyed freedom and what they now asked for was civil power. The Church was no longer intolerant, and it would be an ungrateful act to deprive her after she had survived all the assaults of popery, and had corrected her own errors, of the necessary defences against other dangers. As for the example of France, the unlimited choice of Ministers and officials was one of the incidental advantages despotism possessed over free constitutions. Pitt's conduct was determined entirely by the Bishops, whose opinions he asked the Archbishop of Canterbury to collect and communicate to him. Ten out of twelve prelates decided against renouncing these temporal privileges, and Pitt decided to resist the demand, though the Nonconformists who made it had lately given him a stout support against the Coalition. His speech was partly devoted to answering Fox's main principle of the injustice of basing civil disabilities on religious opinions. The State had the unquestionable right to choose its own officials, and to lay down any standard it thought proper. This particular restriction was designed to uphold the Ecclesiastical constitution; it merely disqualified Nonconformists who carried their hostility to the Established Church to the extreme point of

refusing to communicate with that Church, and the consequences of removing it might be fatal and widespread, for Nonconformists might proceed to attack other privileges enjoyed by the Anglican Church and even the Establishment itself. To the last argument Fox replied in the spirit of the most liberal Churchman of the day, William Paley, that if ever the Nonconformists were in a majority, the Church, in his opinion, ought to be disestablished in favour of a Church that represented the bulk of the nation.

To Burke it was a difficult matter for decision. He was acutely sensible of the indignity offered to religion in making a very solemn act and profession the qualification for civil employment, and he proposed to substitute as the single test an oath of fidelity to the constitution. He was strenuously opposed on the other hand to the doctrine that the state could not investigate men's opinions. In his speech against the motion in 1791 he explained that ten years earlier he would have voted for repeal; that in 1787 and 1789 he had stayed away because he could not decide how to act, and that the writings and speeches of Dissenters, in particular of Dr. Priestley and Dr. Price, in the last two years, had convinced him of the necessity of maintaining the test. It is noticeable that in 1791, amongst the men who spoke and voted against repeal was William Wilberforce.

It may be argued that in practice no great harm resulted from the failure of these several efforts to abolish the civil monopolies and the minatory laws by which the establishment was protected, and that the policy of an illogical caution was not an unwise one. The days of acute persecution were over, and no serious mischief was caused by postponing for a generation the full civil recognition of Dissenters and the abolition of penal laws, of which the worst that could be said was that they disgraced the Statute Book. It is surely truer to say that a very rare opportunity presented itself in George's reign, and how much was lost by the neglect of that opportunity can never be

exactly appreciated. The very arguments used in favour of retaining the penal laws were the strongest arguments for their abolition. If they were too terrible to be used, the Bishops who clung to them were defending religion by the most hideous of scarecrows, and if there was danger to religion in withdrawing them it was obvious that the state needed some deterrent for offences against religion which statesmen would not be ashamed to apply. "What is connivance," said Burke when men defended the compulsion put upon the Dissenters to subscribe to some of the articles, "what is connivance but a relaxation of slavery?" "What," we may ask in reply to him, "was neglect in this matter but a relaxation of barbarity?" A wise statesman uses the sober moods of a people to guard against the hour of delirium. It was at the best a doubtful statesmanship to leave on the Statute Book, on the ground that they were virtually inoperative, laws which no one in Parliament could defend and no magistrate would enforce, if he saw any means of evasion. The history of England no less than the history of France in the last half of the century had shown that private malevolence or religious prejudice or political acrimony might stand on their right to every letter of those musty charters of vindictive intolerance, which men had fancied were laid aside for all time. When Stanhope introduced his Toleration Bill in 1789 he was able to show that within the last twenty-six years one or other of the persecuting laws had been enforced in no less than thirty cases. There was a special danger too at the end of the eighteenth century from the strict Sabbatarian doctrines of the Methodists; the laws of Elizabeth for compelling the observance of Sunday were particularly severe, and a Society had been formed under Wilberforce in 1789 for enforcing them. It was idle to argue as if the dragon of intolerance were finally destroyed when men remembered how, ten years earlier, in the very capital of England and in Scotland, it had scattered havoc, and ruin, and frantic confusion. Before dismissing this agitation as

unimportant practically, however creditable to the men who initiated it, it is necessary to remember what were the hazards religious toleration ran, how recent were the latest explosions of bigotry, and the effect on the minds of men of leaving on the Statute Book, at a time when the dynasty stood in no danger and religion had disowned persecution, the bloody rubrics of a Christianity that had taught men to be loyal and devout in a dungeon or at the stake. The spirit of toleration is not so rapid or so sturdy a growth that men can be forgiven lightly, for leaving it exposed to the pestilent exhalations of dead and withered superstition.

It is surely an equally mistaken view to suppose that no mischief was done by leaving the legal injustices of the Test and Corporation Acts to the rough adjustments of evasion and commonsense irregularity. Those Acts were the most palpable of all the symbols of the political ascendancy of the Church, and the political inferiority of Dissent. To have abolished them in 1789, instead of in 1828, would not merely have been to admit to civil rights a number of men, who chafed under an unjust exclusion, to have struck down fences and barriers, that the very Bishops no longer excused forty years later; it would have done something to check, instead of perpetuating, a spirit of disunion that had come into politics before 1789, and certainly did not go out of politics in 1828. What has been the curse of the Established Church, if it has not been, that for one man like Jeremy Taylor or William Paley, it has produced thousands of men like Bishop Horsley, that it has for the most part clung to every fragment and particle of political privilege with an idolatrous attachment that has not always left it very much reverence for its spiritual obligations, that its lack of independence has betrayed it into an indiscriminate mendicancy, that it has been sadly reluctant and afraid to trust the success of its cause to the energy of its truth and the devotion of its ministers, that it has merged its

own interests so wholly in the integrity of a comprehensive scheme of prerogative and oppression, that its political history is largely the story of a long-drawn resistance to the progress of humane and beneficent opinion? Few again will deny that if Nonconformity inherited from those struggles a robust calibre, an austere hardihood that despised the countenance and the patronising graces of power, a sympathy with men or opinions under the heel of political or social tyranny, it inherited too a certain adventitious rancour, and a temper a little bleak and ungracious. That Fox and Beaufoy were right in thinking the stability of the constitution was in no danger from the abolition of a sacramental test imposed on excisemen and tide-waiters, and that the apprehensions of men like North and Burke were unfounded will not now be disputed. If that view had been accepted in 1789, and these badges of an odious supremacy destroyed, a great blow would have been struck at a system which has throughout a century menaced and weakened the social solidity of England. As it was, the demand for a redress of grievances that were felt very passionately and discussed in all parts of the country was rejected by a majority that did not even pretend that the Dissenters were disaffected to the state or unfriendly to the Establishment, and the consequences of that refusal have not yet disappeared from men and from societies that still cherish their lineage of ill-used privilege, or bitterly remembered wrong.

It was no accident of political circumstance that made Fox, unlike Pitt, and Burke, and North, vote always for religious freedom. He was the first great English statesman whose reverence for toleration was absolute. In a generation of philosophers and politicians that had always reserved the right to banish some sect, or proscribe some opinion, he was content with no ideal of freedom that fell short of a limitless and irrevocable hospitality. The Whig party, before his day, was anti-Catholic, and even Locke himself had argued that the state could not tolerate Papists, men

who, in popular opinion, believed that they were above the law, relieved from their allegiance to the throne, and exempt from all obligations to keep faith with heretics.[1] Fox did not merely support every proposal to give a fuller toleration to Catholics; he declared boldly at the very time that the Gordon riots had convulsed London that "he could not think the papists' religion incompatible with government nor civil liberty; because, in looking round the world, he saw that in Switzerland, where democracy reigned universally in the fullest measure, it flourished most in cantons professing that religion." The Unitarians were a friendless sect. They had been persecuted alike under Cromwell and under Charles II. They were often regarded as atheists, men whom Locke had said were "not at all to be tolerated," to whom Rousseau had refused admission in his Social Contract, and whom Burke had described as "the infidels or the outlaws of the Constitution, not of this country, but of the human race." It was of these men that Fox said with a resonant defiance, "Dr. South in speaking of them has traced their pedigree from wretch to wretch back to the devil himself. These descendants of the devil are my clients." Perhaps the most striking of all the illustrations of Fox's temper of tolerance was his reply to a rhetorical question in the debate on the Test and Corporation Acts, during the speech of a Mr. Powys. "With regard to the principles of toleration advanced by the right honourable gentleman, the right hon. gentleman did not seem to be aware to what an extent they might be pushed, and that it was not the dissenters alone who would be entitled to hold offices of trust and power if the principles he had laid down and argued upon were to be admitted, but dissenters of every denomination; the Jew, the Mahometan, the disciples of Brama, Confucius, and of every head of a sectary. (Mr. Fox cried 'Hear, hear')." Fox alone never turned from his ideal of religious equality to pay a sidelong tribute

[1] Even Milton himself, it must be remembered, denied toleration to Papists, on the ground that they were idolaters.

to popular prejudice, however reasonable, or popular fear, however genuine.

There is a very modern flavour about the arguments by which Fox supported, in a generation in which even Voltaire had assigned the control of religion to the civil magistrate, his contention that the State had no right to interfere with religious opinion.[1] He was the first great statesman to understand how essential to freedom is absolute religious liberty.[2] The least that society could be expected to secure to the individual was the right to hold his opinion unmolested, or, as he put it, in the language of his day, whatever rights man surrendered to society, in return for its advantages, the right to his opinion was inalienable. "It had been said by some persons that although toleration was, of itself, abstractly matter of justice, yet, that in political speculation, it should never be allowed to entrench upon, or endanger existing establishments. The converse of this appeared to him to be true policy and that no defence of any establishment whatever should be built on principles repugnant to toleration. Toleration was not to be regarded as a thing convenient and useful to a state, but a thing in itself essentially right and just. He therefore laid it down as his principle that those who lived in a State where there was an establishment of religion could fairly be bound only by that part of the establishment which was consistent with the pure principles of toleration. What then were those principles? On what were they founded? On the fundamental, inalienable rights of men. It was true there were some rights man should give up, for the sake of securing others in a state of society. But it was true also that he should give up but a portion of his natural rights, in order that he might have a government for the protection of the remainder. But to call on man to give up his

[1] "His sentiment was that the state had no right to inquire into the opinions of people either political or religious."—Cath. Dissenters Relief Bill, Feb. 1791. Vol. iv. p. 145.

[2] "The time he hoped would come when religious liberty would be as generally enjoyed and considered to be as essential as civil liberty."—*Idem*, p. 149.

religious rights was to call on him to do that which was impossible. He would say that no state could compel it, no state ought to require it—because it was not in the power of man to comply with that requisition."[1] To Fox that only was a free state in which no speculative opinion involved either the risk of punishment, or the stigma of forfeited rights.

The state could only interfere with opinion on one of two grounds. The first was that the government was infallible, and could decide the truth of religion. This theory was not maintained. "Mr. Fox wished, as the establishment depended on acts of parliament, to know who gave them a right to decide upon religious opinions, and by what model could they ascertain which opinions were right and which wrong? It was said by some, that the pope was infallible, by others the church and council were infallible, but none had ever contended that that House was infallible; they might subject men to fines and penalties for being better than themselves, at all events, only for differing from them, in their mode of worshipping the Deity."[2] "The truth of religion was not a subject for the discussion of parliament, their duty only was to sanction that which was most universally approved, and to allow it the emoluments of the state. A conviction of the reasonableness of such a procedure, dictated so much liberality in the religious establishments at the union, as well as the more recent establishment of the Roman catholic religion in Canada."[3]

The second was that the state could judge better than the individual of the consequences likely to follow from his opinions. But this inquisition was sheer tyranny. The state might crush opinions by persecution, but it could not dissuade men from them. "Persecution, indeed, originally might be allowed to proceed on this principle of

[1] Fox's Motion for the Repeal of Certain Penal Statutes, May 1792. Vol. iv. p. 419.

[2] Catholic Dissenters Relief Bill. Vol. iv. p. 149.

[3] Motion for the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, March 2, 1790. Vol. iv. p. 64.

kindness—to promote an unity of religious opinion, and to prevent error in the important matters of Christian belief. But did persecution ever succeed in this humane and truly charitable design? Never. Toleration, on the other hand, was founded on the broad and liberal basis of reason and philosophy. It consisted in a just diffidence of our own particular opinion, and recommended universal charity and forbearance to the world around us. The true friend of toleration ought never to impute evil intentions to another, whose opinions might, in his apprehension, be attended with dangerous consequences. The man professing such opinions might not be aware of any evil attached to his principles; and therefore to ascribe to such a person any hostile intention, when his opinions only might be liable to exception, was but the height of illiberality and uncharitableness.

"Thus, much obloquy and unfounded calumny had been used to asperse the character of the Roman catholics, on account of the supposed tendency of their religious tenets to the commission of murder, treason, and every other species of horrid crimes, from a principle of conscience. What was this, but a base imputation of evil intentions, from the uncharitable opinions entertained of that profession as a sect? He lamented their errors, rejected their opinions, which appeared dangerous; was ready to confide in their good professions; and was willing to appeal to the experience of this enlightened age, if they had not been accused unjustly, and condemned uncharitably. For, would any man say that every duty of morality was not practised in those countries in which the Roman catholic religion was established and professed? Would it not be an imputation as palpably false, as it would be illiberal, for any one to utter such a foul, unmerited, and indiscriminate calumny? But this was always the haughty, arrogant, and illiberal language of persecution, which led men to judge uncharitably, and to act with bitter intolerance. Persecution always said, 'I know the consequences of your opinion better than you know them yourselves.' But the language of toleration was

always amicable, liberal, and just; it confessed its doubts, and acknowledged its ignorance. It said, 'Though I dislike your opinions, because I think them dangerous, yet, since you profess such opinions, I will not believe you can think such dangerous inferences flow from them, which strike my attention so forcibly.' This was truly a just and legitimate mode of reasoning, always less liable to error, and more adapted to human affairs. When we argued *à posteriori*, judging from the fruit to the tree, from the effect to the cause, we were not so subject to deviate into error and falsehood, as when we pursued the contrary method of argument. Yet, persecution had always reasoned from cause to effect, from opinion to action, which proved generally erroneous; while toleration led us invariably to form just conclusions by judging from actions and not from opinions. Hence every political and religious test was extremely absurd; and the only test, in his opinion, to be adopted, ought to be a man's actions."[1]

"In this country, it was well known, that there was in the establishment a sect termed Methodists, to whom it was imputed that they held a doctrine that some were of the elect, and some reprobated; a doctrine *primâ facie* as bad as could be supposed to be entertained, because it was full as hostile to morality, as the absolution of the pope; but, he would not therefore condemn Methodists, and think that they ought to be persecuted. His mode of looking at the matter was this: he concluded that they who held such doctrines did not see the same evil consequences as appeared to him likely to follow from them. He knew that there had existed many of the Methodist persuasion, as worthy, as good, and as exemplary characters as ever lived of any sect or description."[2]

Fox saw too that whatever tests or discriminations were employed, religious tests were as useless as they were unjust.

[1] Motion for the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, March 2, 1790. Vol. iv. pp. 58 and 59.

[2] Catholic Dissenters Relief Bill, March 1, 1791. Vol. iv. p. 150.

Who were excluded? Conscientious men to whom the taking of the Sacrament to qualify for office was a profanation. Were they necessarily bad citizens? "With regard to the test act, he thought that the best argument which could be used in its favour was, that if it had but little good effect, it had also little bad. In his opinion, it was altogether inadequate to the end which it had in view. The purport of it was, to protect the established church, by excluding from office every man who did not declare himself well affected to that church. But a professed enemy to the hierarchy might go to the communion table, and afterwards say, that in complying with a form enjoined by law, he had not changed his opinion, nor, as he conceived, incurred any religious obligation whatever. There were many men, not of the established church, to whose services their country had a claim. Ought any such man to be examined before he came into office, touching his private opinions? Was it not sufficient, that he did his duty as a good citizen? Might he not say, without incurring any disability, 'I am not a friend to the church of England, but I am a friend to the constitution, and on religious subjects must be permitted to think and act as I please.' Ought their country to be deprived of the benefit which she might derive from the talents of such men, and his majesty prevented from dispensing the favours of the crown, except to one description of his subjects? But whom did the test exclude? the irreligious man, the man of profligate principles, or the man of no principle at all? Quite the contrary; to such men the road to power was open; the test excluded only the man of tender conscience; the man who thought religion so distinct from all temporal affairs, that he held it improper to profess any religious opinion whatever, for the sake of a civil office. Was a tender conscience inconsistent with the character of an honest man? Or did a high sense of religion show that he was unfit to be trusted?"[1] His condemna-

[1] Motion for the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, May 8, 1789. Vol. iv. p. 6.

tion was restrospective. In times when there was danger from Catholics the test ought to have been made political, and not religious.

He saw that intolerance was a weakness to the nation, for it excluded or drove out good citizens, and he illustrated this by the injury done to France by the revocation of the Édict of Nantes. "The constitution, both civil and ecclesiastical, previous to this period, had remained unmolested and unimpaired; there existed no test; protestants and catholics were indiscriminately admitted into civil and military offices; but by that rash measure, liberality and toleration were thrown away; the arts and manufactures were driven into other countries, to flourish in a more genial soil and under a milder form of government. This should serve as a caution to the church of England. Persecution might prevail for a time, but it generally terminated in the punishment of its abettors."[1] It also deprived the nation of the stimulating effects of free discussion. "Since that time it (the church) had flourished and improved; but how? By toleration and moderate behaviour. And how had these been produced? By the members of the established church being forced to hear the arguments of the dissenters; by their being obliged to oppose argument to argument, instead of imposing silence by the strong hand of power; by that modest confidence in the truth of their own tenets and charity for those of others, which the collision of opinions in open and liberal discussion among men living under the same government, and equally protected by it, never failed to produce."[2] His whole career shows that no man had a clearer appreciation than Fox of what England owed to that atmosphere of intellectual conflict which had left such a lasting impression on Voltaire.

There is one modern idea that neither he nor anyone else in politics had yet appreciated, for he assumed in all

[1] Motion for the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, March 2, 1790. Vol. iv. p. 65.

[2] *Speeches*, vol. iv. p. 5.

his arguments the necessity for some religious establishment. But he was resolutely opposed to any method of maintaining that establishment which pressed on any man's conscience. One method of maintaining it was the method of requiring subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles at the Universities, and Fox both spoke and told as early as 1773 for a motion to go into Committee to consider the abolition of such subscription, stating as his chief reason the mischief and the danger of making boys subscribe to articles of religion which they could not possibly understand. He showed, in that discussion as in all others, an angry impatience of the prevarications which would explain away the meaning of solemn and portentous acts of religion. His dislike of tests led him to support the petition of some Broad Church clergymen in 1774 to be relieved of the obligation to subscribe to anything but the Bible, an appeal to which Burke replied with rather damaging ridicule, and which the House of Commons rejected without a division.

It is in the argument between Fox and Burke that the controversy becomes heroic. There is little that is impressive in an intolerance which is merely sectarianism, for, at the best, it combines with religious enthusiasm the atmosphere of a not very august rivalry, and a rather undignified emulation. The human mind is not very likely to bow down before the spectacle of a Bishop whose supreme notion of religion it is that a Nonconformist shall never be a mayor. The spectacle loses nothing of its rather mean proportions, when we know that a still stronger motive than this bizarre form of religious zeal was a very unmistakable spirit of time-serving and servility to a sovereign in whose mind hatred of Nonconformists had the tenacity of superstition. Nor is the intolerance embodied in Pitt's opposition to reform a very imposing quality. For his subordination of his own views to the king's prejudices in 1787 there was not even the apology his admirers offer for his abandonment of the cause of the Irish Catholics; the nation was tranquil, the King was not senile, his alarms were no part of a general panic, or

the prejudices of grey-haired decrepitude. But Pitt's opposition was not throughout mere deference to the obstinate will of George and to the sectarian impulses of the Bishops. He came to oppose reform deliberately, on the ground of a political prudence, which made him regard Dissenters with some suspicion, as bad subjects, and the relaxation of civil control of opinion as dangerous to the stability of the state. The difference between him and Fox, in this respect, was that Fox believed with Locke that dissent was not in itself a danger, but that dissent subjected to grievances and disabilities might be a danger. "It was not the diversity of opinions, which cannot be avoided, but the refusal of toleration to those that are of different opinions which might have been granted that has produced all the bustles and wars that have been in the Christian world on account of religion."

Intolerance that was ashamed to display itself in all its colours, and was dressed up in the trivial jealousies of sects, or wore a disguise of civil discipline, was rather a dowdy and unpretentious figure. In Burke as in Rousseau there reappeared something of the splendour of the old persecutions; in his mouth intolerance spoke not in the fractious voice of sectarianism, nor in the balanced undertones of political caution, but with the very sorcery of a passionate humanity. Burke would have punished error in the spirit St. Augustine would have punished it, "Quid enim est pejor, mors animæ quam libertas erroris?" He would never consent to subject one set of Christians to disabilities, just because another set desired some advantages. He would never allow Roman Catholics to suffer because their doctrines were unpopular and because most persons in England were Protestant. He would have chosen some other test than a sacrament to protect the Established Church. Intolerance was far too majestic a weapon to be wasted on the minor quarrels of Christianity. Burke reserved it for the free-thinker, and in that combat he used it without mercy. Christianity, in all the range of its accepted forms, was to him what Catholicism had been to Innocent; it was not a mere system of speculative truth,

nor a mere system of moral discipline, it was universal civilisation itself, the whole category of human conduct, and hope, and consolation, the indispensable interpretation of human life. He regarded the speculative energy of the eighteenth century with much the same horror as the founder of the Inquisition felt for the first movements of an independent intellectual life in the great unity Catholicism had so brilliantly established. The free-thinker was not merely a turbulent citizen or a profane mocker, he was the enemy of the human race, he was a conspirator against the peace and happiness of the world, he was a rebel not against this form or that form, not against one rule or another, but against the common splendour of mankind. "Have as many sorts of religion as you find in your country, there is a reasonable worship in them all; the others, the infidels, are outlaws of the constitution—not of this country, but of the human race. They are never, never to be supported, never to be tolerated. These are the wicked dissenters you ought to fear; these are the people against whom you ought to aim the shafts of law; these are the men to whom, arrayed in all the terrors of government, I would say, 'You shall not degrade us into brutes'; these men, these factious men are the just objects of vengeance, not the conscientious Dissenter; these men who would take away whatever ennobles the rank or consoles the misfortunes of human nature by breaking off that connexion of observances, of affections, of hopes and fears, which bind us to the Divinity, and constitute the glorious and distinguishing prerogative of humanity—that of being a religious creature; against these I would have the laws rise in all their majesty of terrors to fulminate against such vain and impious wretches, and to awe them into impotence by the only dread they can fear or believe, to learn that awful lesson 'Discite justitiam moniti, et non temnere divos.'"[1]

It was a picturesque onslaught on men Burke had never wished or tried to understand. It implied a strange failure to

[1] *Works*, vol. ii. p. 473.

appreciate the extent to which the process of decomposition in Europe had already set in, and a strange exaggeration of the solidarity of a Christianity to whose divisions, as Mr. Morley once said, liberty owes as much as charity owes to her agreements. But it has a sombre grandeur of its own, by the side of the frivolous waste of the energy of religious fervour spent on the civil wars of English Christianity, and it marked out Burke unmistakably as the champion of the cause of traditional authority, when the battle was no longer one of dialectic, or satire, or invective, but of armed and merciless passion.

Burke's greatest biographer has shown that the refusal of toleration to free thought, and his uncompromising hatred of men whom he roughly classified as atheists, were all part of a political temperament that postponed truth itself to peace, and made order and repose the great criterion of political success. It is not fanciful to argue, that the converse of all this is to be seen in Fox, and that the statesman who preferred freedom to order ascribed naturally to the free exercise of human opinion the sanctity with which Burke invested established belief. His attack on the civil entrenchment of orthodoxy was not that of a flippant indifference; it was that of a reverence as deep and passionate as the reverence with which Burke defended those entrenchments. To Fox the human mind was as sacred as the Christian synthesis was sacred to Burke. To Burke opinions, which were not his opinions, were consecrated by custom, to Fox they were consecrated by sincerity. To Burke it was intolerable that inquisitive or bewildered men should unfasten convictions that were the golden gates of social peace and harmony, in a spirit of prying curiosity or intellectual daring. To Fox it was intolerable that a single opinion should live on the sufferance of the barbarism that had produced the Gordon riots, or on the judgments of prelates with a vested interest in injustice, or on the very Bœotian intellect of such a ruler as George III. If Burke had a great conception in asking Christianity to forswear

its internecine quarrels, in defence of social order, Fox had a greater in asking Christianity to lay aside its secular weapons, in respect for the spirit of truth. It was a new thing for the Irish Protestant to be told in the magnificent language of Burke that religion was such a sacred thing that Christians must not persecute each other. It was a much newer thing for a good many besides an Irish Protestant or an English Bishop, to be told that religion was such a sacred thing that the state must not attempt to control it. In the effort to impress that truth upon his generation, the truth he first taught to English Liberalism, Fox summoned to his aid all the best qualities of his implacable magnanimity. A statesman who would have scorned to drive a bargain with his conscience, or to play a part before it, he was relentlessly at war with a system that fostered or rewarded hypocrisy, and encouraged men to persuade themselves that ceremonies were mere pantomimes, if they were the condition of civil advancement. If he fought relentlessly against all the sophistries by which statesmen who disowned persecution still perpetuated the intolerance of the dead, it was just because no statesman had combined so passionately as he, respect for the rights of man with respect for the rights of reason.

APPENDICES

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TABLE OF PRINCIPAL DATES

1749. Fox's birth.
1757. Fox goes to Eton.
1763. His father takes him on his first tour.
1764. He goes to Hertford College, Oxford.
1768. Elected for Midhurst.
1770. Becomes Junior Lord of Admiralty in North's Government.
His violent speeches over the Middlesex Election and the dispute with the City make him intensely unpopular, and he is stoned by the populace at the Lord Mayor's trial.
1772. *Feb.* Fox resigns office to oppose Royal Marriage Act.
At the end of the year returns to the Ministry as Junior Lord of the Treasury.
1774. Dismissed from office.
He opposes Boston Port Bill and other coercive measures of Government.
1775–1782. Fox makes speeches against the American War.
1776. American Declaration of Independence.
1778. Death of Chatham.
Sir George Savile's Bill for Relief of Roman Catholics.
1779. Economy agitation begins. Fox makes many speeches for economical reform in this and following years. Active agitation in the country. Sir Henry Hoghton's Bill for relieving dissenting ministers.
Ireland. Catholic Relief Act. Volunteer movement begins.
1780. *April.* Dunning's motion "that the influence of the crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished" carried by 233 to 215.
June. Gordon Riots.
1782. *March.* North resigns.
Rockingham Prime Minister. Fox Foreign Secretary.

1782. Measures against corruption passed.
May. Fox moves Resolution recognising independence of Irish Parliament.
Pitt's motion for Parliamentary Reform supported by Fox, rejected by 161 to 141.
July. Rockingham dies. Shelburne Prime Minister. Fox and Burke resign. Pitt becomes Chancellor of the Exchequer.
Ireland. Further Catholic Relief Acts passed.

1783. *Jan.* Peace with America and France. England acknowledges independence of United States.
Feb. Coalition between Fox and North. Their amendment disapproving peace carried by 207 to 190.
April. Coalition Government with Portland as Prime Minister.
May. Pitt's motion for Parliamentary Reform supported by Fox, rejected by 293 to 149.
Nov. Fox's India Bill carried through Commons, but rejected in Lords by 95 to 76. Coalition Ministry dismissed Dec. 18. Pitt becomes Prime Minister.
Ireland. Great Convention of Volunteers. Irish Parliament refuses to be intimidated into carrying reform.

1784. *March.* Dissolution. Coalition lose 160 seats. Debates on the Westminster Scrutiny.
July. Pitt's India Bill carried. Fox opposes it.

1785. *Feb.–May.* Pitt's Irish Propositions opposed by Fox and North, modified, and finally withdrawn.
April. Pitt's motion for Parliamentary Reform supported by Fox but lost by 248 to 174.
Pitt supports Fox's motion for Impeachment of Warren Hastings on Benares charge, which is carried by 119 to 79. House of Commons appoints Committee for Impeachment next year.

1787. Commercial Treaty with France, opposed by Fox and Burke.
Beaufoy's first attempt to repeal Test and Corporation Acts. Fox supports, Pitt opposes repeal.

1788. *Feb.* Trial of Warren Hastings begins.
Slave trade debates.
Dec. Debates on the Regency lasting several weeks.

1789. Beaufoy's second motion for repeal of Test and Corporation Acts.

Debates on Abolition of slave trade.

1790. Fox's motion for repeal of Test and Corporation Acts.

Dispute with Spain over Nootka Sound. Pitt supported by the Opposition.

1791. Catholic Dissenters Relief Bill. Quebec Bill.

March. Separation between Fox and Burke.

April. Wilberforce's motion for Abolition of slave trade supported by Fox and Pitt defeated by 163 to 88.

"Friends of the People" and London Corresponding Society formed.

1792. Fox's Libel Bill passed.

Fox's motion to repeal Penal Statutes rejected by 142 to 63.

Debates on slave trade, motion for gradual abolition carried in Commons defeated in Lords.

Some abortive negotiations for coalition between Pitt and Fox.

Aug. 10. Storming of the Tuileries. Louis XVI. deposed. Grenville recalls Gower. Chauvelin remains in England. September massacres. November decree. Pitt sees Maret Dec. 1. Parliament meets Dec. 13. Fox's motion for sending a Minister to Paris negatived.

Ireland. Concessions to Roman Catholics.

1793. *Jan.* 21. French King executed. *Jan.* 22. Le Brun sends despatch to Chauvelin conciliatory to England. Chauvelin recalled and Maret to be *chargé d'affaires*. *Jan.* 24. Chauvelin ordered by the English Government to leave England in eight days. *Jan.* 25. Chauvelin leaves. *Jan.* 30. Maret arrives.

Feb. 1. Convention declares war on England and Holland.

Feb. 18. Fox's resolution on war defeated by 270 to 44.

May. Grey's motion for Parliamentary Reform defeated by 282 to 41.

Aug., Sept., and later. Treason trials. Muir, Palmer and others transported.

Ireland. Catholic Relief, including suffrage.

1794. *Feb.* Debate on slave trade.

May. Habeas Corpus Act suspended by 183 to 33.

1794. *July.* Fitzwilliam, Windham, and Portland join the Government.

Oct., Dec. Hardy, Horne Tooke and others tried for treason and acquitted.

Dec. Wilberforce, a supporter of the war, moves an amendment to the Address, but is defeated by 240 to 73.

1795. *Jan.* Grey secures 86 votes against 269 for motion for peace.

Feb. 23. Fitzwilliam's recall from Ireland.

Feb. Debate on slave trade.

May. Debate on recall of Fitzwilliam.

June. Warren Hastings acquitted. Burke retires from Parliament.

Nov. Treason and Sedition Bills passed. Vigorous opposition.

1796. Unsuccessful negotiations with Directorate.

Feb. Grey's motion for peace with France lost by 189 to 50. Debates on slave trade.

May. Fox's motion on conduct of war lost by 216 to 42.

1797. Unsuccessful negotiations with France.

March. Fox's motion on state of Ireland lost by 220 to 84.

May. Fox's motion for repeal of Treason and Sedition Bills lost by 260 to 52. Grey's motion for Parliamentary Reform lost by 256 to 91.

May. Mutiny at the Nore.

July. Burke's death. Fox in retirement.

1798. Fox in retirement. *May.* His name struck off the Privy Council for toast at the Whig Club. Irish Rebellion.

1799. Fox in retirement.

1800. Fox in retirement, but comes up to move motion of censure on answer to Napoleon's overtures. Motion lost by 265 to 64.

July. Act of Union.

1801. *March.* Pitt resigns. Addington becomes Prime Minister.

March 25. Grey's motion on the state of the nation lost by 291 to 105.

Oct. Preliminaries of peace signed.

1802. *March.* Peace of Amiens signed.

Fox goes to Paris to consult records for his history.

1803. *May.* War breaks out with France.

1803. *May* 24. Grey's amendment to Address supported by Fox, defeated by 398 to 67.

May 27. Fox's motion for the mediation of Russia opposed by Government, but afterwards on Pitt's advice accepted.

1804. *April.* Fox's motion on defence of the country supported by Pitt, lost by 256 to 204.

May. Addington resigns. Pitt becomes Prime Minister.

1805. Fox's motion for Catholic Emancipation opposed by Pitt, lost by 336 to 124.

June. Grey's motion on state of public affairs lost by 261 to 110.

Dec. Battle of Austerlitz.

1806. *Jan.* Death of Pitt. Grenville becomes Prime Minister with Fox as Foreign Secretary.

Negotiations with Napoleon.

May. Limited service in the army carried on Windham's motion by 254 to 125.

June. Fox's motion for abolishing slave trade carried by 114 to 15.

Sept. 13. Death of Fox.

TABLE OF EVENTS TO ILLUSTRATE CHAPTER X

ENGLAND.	FRANCE.
1791.	1791.
	June. Flight of King to Varennes.
Aug. Grenville contemplates epoch of peace.	*Aug.* 27. Declaration of Pilnitz.
Oct. Lord Effingham stops negro insurrection in S. Domingo.	*Oct.* 1. Second National Assembly opens.
	Oct. 31. Decree against emigrants.
Nov. Report of design of Rochambeau to raise insurrections in Netherlands and Holland sent by Grenville to Gower.	*Nov.* Assembly thanks British Nation and "Mr." Effingham.
	Nov. Gower not reassuring; thinks Grenville's report not unlikely.
	Nov. Clootz harangues Assembly, denouncing despotic powers, including England. Discourse printed.
1792.	1792.
Jan. 10. Search for contraband goods in French legation promptly apologised for.	*Jan.* Barthélemy recalled. Hirsinger sent as *Chargé d'Affaires* to London.
Between *Jan.* 10 and 20. Hirsinger acknowledges courtesy of Grenville, but is suspicions of England's	

1792.	ENGLAND.	1792.	FRANCE.
	intentions, though Grenville assures him they will abstain from interference.		
Jan. 20.	Hirsinger presented to King, received cordially but "frankly."		
		Jan. 24.	Talleyrand sent on mission to England.
Jan. 31.	Opening of Parliament. King's Speech anticipates continuance of present tranquillity and advises reduction of forces. Fox approves.		
Jan. and *Feb.*	Talleyrand tries to obtain assurances of neutrality in case of war between France and Emperor, and urges alliance. Received courteously, but fails to obtain formal answer. Recommends sending a young intelligent Minister to England.		
Feb. 17.	Pitt in Budget Speech anticipates fifteen years' peace with assurance.		
		March.	Girondin Ministry in power.
		March 1.	Emperor Leopold II. dies.
March 9.	Grenville tells Gower to confine himself to assurance of friendly sentiments.		
		March 10.	Talleyrand returns satisfied to France.
April.	Disputes between English and French sailors on coast of Malabar settled easily.		
		April 11.	Gower writes French Ministry anxious to be on good terms with England.
		April 19.	Chauvelin sent as Minister to England with Du Rovaray and Talleyrand. Instructed to obtain positive assurances of neutrality in event of war, and to suggest a defensive alliance and raise a loan.
		April 20.	France declares war on Emperor.
April.	Pitt assures commercial deputation that England will take no part in war. Government issues proclamation affirming strict neutrality of England.	*April.*	Gower writes French army very feeble.
May, June, July.	Chauvelin writes no grounds for doubting England's pacific disposition.	*April, May, June.*	French armies unsuccessful.
May.	Thurlow dismissed. Chauvelin writes this advantageous to France.	*March–July.*	Queen corresponds with foreign powers.
May.	Government issues proclamation against seditious writings. Chauvelin protests.		
		June 13.	King dismisses Girondin Ministers.

1792. ENGLAND.

June 15. End of Session. King's Speech anticipates peace.
Abortive attempt to bring about coalition of Pitt and Fox.

June 18. Chauvelin presents memorial inveighing against conduct of invading sovereigns, and urging English Government to interfere. Grenville replies will abstain from all interference.

Aug. 9. Grenville forbids Gower to depart from strict neutrality.

Aug. 17. Government recalls Gower, but adheres to strict neutrality. Chauvelin remains in England, not officially recognised.

Aug. 21. Government issues circular to Powers, stating recall of Gower and intentions of neutrality.

Sept. 20. Grenville sends note to Imperial and Neapolitan ministers with formal assurances that murderers of French King or Queen shall not receive an asylum.

1792. FRANCE.

June 20. Tuileries besieged.

July 14. Memorial from King urging allies to interfere.

July 26. Duke of Brunswick at Coblentz issues proclamation.

Aug. 4. Gower writes for instructions.

Aug. 10. Tuileries stormed.
King dethroned and imprisoned.
National Convention summoned.
(*Note.*—Lavisse and Rambaud. "The Government try to reassure Europe by explaining this revolution, and promising to punish any Frenchman who should interfere in the political discussions of an allied or neutral people." Special reference to England.)

Aug. 16. English deputation congratulates French Assembly on events of Aug. 10.

Aug. 18. Revolutionary Tribunal created.

Aug. 19. German army crosses French frontier.

Aug. 23. Longwy captured by Prussians.

Sept. 2. Verdun taken.

Sept. 2–6. September massacres.

Sept. 10. War declared against King of Sardinia.

Sept. 13, 14. Allies obtain possession of Argonne pass.

Sept. 20. Battle of Valmy.

1792. ENGLAND.

End of *Sept.* Lords of the Admiralty reduce numbers of seamen.
Chauvelin writes, if England treated with consideration and France behaves well, the Republic will be recognised.
Many French agents over in England.

Oct. 22. Du Rovaray urges Grenville to recognise Republic.
Oct. 30. Chauvelin authorised by Le Brun to repudiate idea of annexation of Belgium and Holland.
Nov. 6. Grenville writes Auckland urging neutrality on the Dutch.
Nov. 7. Confidential letter of Grenville rejoicing in neutrality and hoping for retrenchment.
All *Nov.* Distress, riots, and republican propaganda.
Nov. 13. Formal declaration sent to States General assuring Holland of determination to execute treaty of 1788.
Nov. 13. Letters of instruction to ambassadors at Berlin and Vienna authorising them to break silence on French affairs.

Nov. 29. Chauvelin urges Grenville to recognise the Republic.
All *Dec.* Naval activity.

1792. FRANCE.

Sept. 21. National Convention meets and proclaims Republic.
End of *Sept.* Savoy conquered. Nice annexed.
Sept. 28. Custine marches into Germany.
Sept. 30. Allies retreat.
Spires taken by Custine.
Verdun and Longwy retaken.

Oct. 4. Custine enters Worms.
Oct. 21. Custine enters Mayence.

Nov. 6. Battle of Jemapes.

Nov. French gunboats ask permission from Holland to sail up Scheldt. Are refused.
Nov. 14. French enter Brussels.
Nov. 14. Mollondorf crosses Polish frontier.
Nov. 16. Resolutions of Executive Council abolishing as contrary to the laws of nature the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt and Meuse, and authorising French armies to pursue Austrians even to Holland.
Nov. middle. Maret sent on secret mission to England.
Nov. 19. Decree of Convention promising assistance to any nation desiring to regain liberty.
Nov. 28. Antwerp capitulates.
English Deputation at Bar of Convention.

Dec. beginning of. Eustache demands passage through Maestricht.

1792. ENGLAND.

Dec. 1. Militia called out.

Dec. 2. Maret has interview with Pitt; explains away decree of November 16; Pitt friendly, proposes secret negotiation.

Dec. 4. Grenville writes Auckland saying His Majesty has thought it necessary to arm in view of French conduct, and urges Holland to do likewise, to resist illegal demands and to maintain neutrality.

Dec. 13. Parliament meets. King's Speech views French attitude with uneasiness.

Dec. 13. Alien Bill introduced.

Dec. 13. Amendment of Fox urging that England should treat with France negatived by 290 to 50.

Dec. 15. Maret has interview with Pitt, explains decision of December 9.

Dec. 19. Maret leaves England.

Dec. 27. Chauvelin presents peremptory note to Grenville asking if England is neutral or hostile. France will not attack Holland if Holland is neutral.

Dec. 29. Pitt sends proposal to Russia to make joint representations to France (not known till 1800).

Dec. 29. Russian ambassador proposes concert with his court on French affairs.
Grenville expresses willingness to oppose French aggression, unwillingness to interfere in internal affairs.

Dec. 31. Grenville answers Chauvelin's note of 27th, says King has no official intercourse with France, but states English views; cannot consent to France breaking treaties

1792. FRANCE.

Dec. early. Custine driven out of Germany.

Dec. 2. Namur taken.

Dec. 3. French vessels sail up Scheldt.

Dec. 9 onwards. Auckland suborns De Maulde and procures secret documents about proposed revolution in Holland. Not a "formed design."

Dec. 9. French Ministers refuse proposal for secret negotiations; will act only through Chauvelin.

Middle *Dec.* Attempts to seize Coblentz and Treves fail.

Dec. 15. Decree of Convention that in countries occupied by French arms the sovereignty of the people is to be proclaimed, and those who will not accept it treated as enemies.

Dec. 25. Auckland thinks that the worst is over.

Dec. 31. French Minister for Navy sends violent circular to seaports about impending war with England.

1792.	ENGLAND.	1792.	FRANCE.
	and annulling political system; will remain friendly if France gives up aggression.		
1793.		1793.	
Jan. 7.	Chauvelin sends note asserting official character and complaining of Alien Act.	*Jan.* 1.	Dumouriez arrives in Paris.
Jan. 8.	Grenville returns note; diplomatic character assumed inadmissible.		
Jan. 12.	Imperial and Prussian ambassadors inform Grenville of approaching partition of Poland. Grenville replies England can have nothing to do with it.	*Jan.* 12.	Brissot for Diplomatic Committee presents report to Assembly accusing British Government of malevolence and urging demand for repeal of Alien Act and explanation of armaments.
Jan. 13.	Chauvelin presents friendly note from Lebrun. Executive Council wish for friendly relations and accredited representative, and send formal letter of credence to Chauvelin. Decree of November 19 explained away; opening of Scheldt defended as of vital importance to Belgium, and as a right unjustly sacrificed by Emperor: if England and Holland dissatisfied they must negotiate with Belgium. France renounces conquest, will restore independence to Belgium when liberty consolidated. If England continues hostile, will fight with regret, without fear.	*Jan.* 13.	Convention orders arming of ships and construction of new ones.
Jan. 18 and 20.	Grenville sends peremptory notes; pronounces French explanations unsatisfactory, says England will persist in measures for security of self and allies, and refuses to recognise Chauvelin officially.	*Jan.* 18.	Auckland writes that he hears from banker Hope that invasion of Holland determined on.
		Jan. 21.	King executed.
Jan. 22.	Grenville writes to Auckland that he has private information from Paris that next French campaign will be against Holland.	*Jan.* 22.	Le Brun sends despatch to Chauvelin recalling him as his credentials were not received. Conciliatory tone. French wish for peace. Maret coming over as *Chargé d'Affaires*.
		Jan. 23.	Auckland writes 70,000 Austrians coming to Low Countries. Dutch difficult to move.
Jan. 24.	Chauvelin ordered to leave within eight days.		
Jan. 25.	Chauvelin leaves, receiving despatch of 22nd on the way.		

1793.	ENGLAND.	1793.	FRANCE.
Jan. 28.	Correspondence between King's Ministers and Chauvelin laid before Parliament and augmentation of forces demanded. Reinhard (Secretary of Embassy) writes to Le Brun urging a pacific overture: feeling cooling.	*Jan.* 28.	Secret visit of De Maulde to Auckland proposing that Dumouriez should negotiate.
Jan. 30.	Maret arrives.		
Feb. 4.	Grenville writes Auckland authorising him to see Dumouriez, but England can only negotiate on terms mentioned to Chauvelin; Maret ordered to quit England and no agent of Executive Council to remain.	*Feb.* 1.	Chauvelin having arrived, the Convention declares war against England and Holland.
Feb. 5.	Grenville writes to Eden urging understanding with Austria to make peace with France if she will give up conquests.		
Feb. 7.	Maret quits London and receives news of declaration of war at Calais.		

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